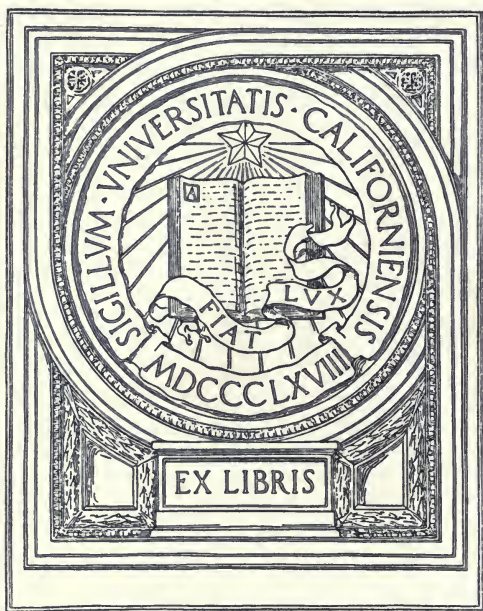


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A MEXICAN MILITARY ROMANCE.

THE LIGHT DRAGOON:

—OR, THE—

Rancheros of the Poisoned Lance.

—A TALE OF THE—

BATTLE FIELDS OF MEXICO.

Justin Jones

BY HARRY HAZEL, pseud.

*Author of 'Big Dick,' 'Inez, the Beautiful,' 'Middy of the Macedonian,' 'Nun of St. Ursula,'
'The Burglars,' 'West Point Cadet,' etc.*



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TO
THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS
COMPOSING THE
ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
WHOSE RECENT UNPARALLELED
VICTORIES IN MEXICO,
HAVE PROVED TO THE WORLD THEIR INVINCIBILITY
IN THE BATTLE FIELD,
THIS WORK
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED, BY
THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,
HARRY HAZEL.

THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS
OF THE UNITED STATES
VICTORIES IN MEXICO
IN THE BATTLE FIELD
THIS WORK
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

W. H. HARRIS

THE LIGHT DRAGOON.

CHAPTER I.

In which our readers are introduced to a very pretty girl—to the village in which she resided, and to an old soldier who had 'done the state some service.' An Interesting Interview. News from the War. Arrival of a Recruiting Officer. Symptoms of an Excitement.

ROSALIA GRANVILLE—pretty, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked Rosalia—everybody knew her—that is, every body who resides within two leagues round about the beautiful village of L——, situated—we sha'n't tell exactly the spot—but somewhere north of Mason & Dixon's Line; and if the reader can boast of Yankee origin, he will be able to guess, if he but follow us through the startling adventures of his romance in real life. We feel a decided reluctance in divulging the *locale* of several of our characters, for the very simple reason, that they, being naturally sensitive, might demur at the somewhat free use we intend to make of them; and when they return from the wars, flushed with victory, and find themselves the heroes of a romance, their belligerent spirits might make a demonstration in a quarter where it would be decidedly disagreeable to our feelings.

We commenced with Rosalia Granville, and we wish our readers to know more of

her, before we begin to weave the curious and mysterious plots and counterplots which must necessarily characterise our story.—Rose—as she was familiarly called for brevity's sake—we said was pretty, and had blue eyes; her figure was *petite*, sylph-like in proportion, and light and agile as a fairy-queen's; but these qualities, however fascinating, were the least of Rose Granville's charms. Her eyes, like all blue eyes, were mild, when not kindled with the fire that is sometimes hidden within the soul, even of azure-eyed beauties. Seldom, it is true, did the concealed fire radiate from her countenance. Seldom was it that the latent spirit brought into activity those qualities which the world had not yet seen—but when they were aroused, her eyes twinkled like twin-stars from their spheres, full of fire, soul, life and love.

Rose Granville, within the little circle of her acquaintance, was known but as a mild, amiable beauty—intelligent, witty, agreeable and lovely withal. She was envied by all of her compeers in beauty, and loved by

those who were not excited by envy, because of these things; but how much more was there in her character, in its true light, that the world—not even most of her intimate friends—had yet discovered or dreamed of. She was but sixteen years of age when we first knew her, and that was at the time of the earliest events of this romantic narrative. Her father, who had had much experience in his country's service, and who arose to the rank of a Major of Dragoons in the army, had now retired, for the purpose of spending the remainder of his days peacefully in the society of the only being then living, whom he cherished with his warmest affections—his wife having died previous to the surrendering of his commission. She was his second wife—he having, when quite young, wedded a lady of rank and fortune, while stationed at a post in Florida, by whom he had one child. While yet in its infancy, in one of the predatory incursions of the Seminoles, the post was surprised one night when young Granville, then a lieutenant, was necessarily absent, and nearly the whole garrison was cut to pieces by the merciless savages. Mrs. Granville was among the first victims; and while yet writhing in the agonies of death, her infant was snatched from her breast by an old squaw, who thrusting the child into a pack upon her back, carried it off to her wigwam.

Soon after this most brutal event, young Granville returned to the north, and in two years was again married to a beautiful and accomplished lady—the mother of our heroine. Twelve years passed away, and Major Granville followed his second wife to her grave, leaving a lovely daughter of thirteen years of age to solace his declining years.

Granville Cottage—for by this title was the Major's residence known to his neighbor's—was one of those delightful rural abodes, now so common in the vicinity of most of the great metropolises. Here Rosalia and her father, with the exception of two or three months in winter, passed their

time; and besides a few fashionable accomplishments, which were acquired from competent teachers, she was wholly educated by her father. He having received his education at the West Point Military Academy, and having graduated with high honors, it will not be thought strange that he should undertake the task of imparting to his child, such of his own acquirements as might be deemed proper and useful. Under his skillful tutelage she not only mastered the German, French and Spanish languages, but she gained also a tolerable insight into Algebra, Geometry, Astronomy, and other important branches. Nor was her parental instructor fully satisfied with her study alone of the sciences, but he took delight, so far as his apparatus would admit of making her *practically* understand what she had acquired. This may be thought a strange education for a young girl—as indeed it is—but the results thereof will be perceived to have a slight bearing upon many of the incidents in future chapters of this tale, which we hope to render intelligible to all who follow us to the conclusion. Without further introductory words, we commence our pleasing task.

It was on the evening of the twenty second day of May, 1846—we like to be precise when we can—that Major Granville and his daughter were seated at the round table in the centre of a beautifully furnished apartment of Granville Cottage. This room was the repository of a valuable library, which the veteran officer had collected in his travels, and the rich looking books arranged upon the shelves around the walls, indicated that no slovenly hand had assigned to each volume its place. A few pictures—rare specimens from the life-giving pencils of those masters who have adorned the galleries of Rome, Florence and Naples—adorned the vacant spaces upon the walls, while in the niches, and upon brackets, were several busts of eminent men, and statuettes of Cupid and Psyche, Diana, Venus de Medi-

cis, and other copies of immortal works of poetical statuary.

In an antique, straight, high-backed, armed chair, sat Major Granville, devouring the contents of several newspapers, which that evening's mail had brought him; while the fair Rosalia was busy in plying the needle through and through the delicate texture of a piece of lace—for it must be known that her domestic education had not been neglected, in order to make her a greater proficient in the languages and in sciences.

'Pshaw!' involuntarily uttered the ex-military officer; 'humbug!'

'Pray what is it, father, that draws from you such contemptuous exclamations?' asked Rosalia.

'Why here's another rumor that a great battle has been fought on the Rio Grande. These newspapers do invent such improbable stories.'

'Do read it aloud, father,' said the sweet-toned voice of Rosalia.

'By Magnetic Telegraph,' read the Major. 'By an arrival at New Orleans, we have rumors that a great battle was fought on the 8th instant, at Palo Alto, in which the Americans with fifteen hundred troops have annihilated the Mexican Army under General Arista, who with a force of six thousand men had endeavored to frustrate General Taylor in his intention of relieving the small force stationed at Point Isabel.'—'All moonshine,' continued the Major, 'the cowardly Mexicans would not dare to intercept Taylor.'

'It may be true,' suggested Rosalia.

'Can't be! all a guy, depend upon it; got up to make the daily papers sell.'

'And yet, from all I have read of our army's movements and that of the Mexicans, in the vicinity of Matamoras, I think it not improbable that a battle has been fought.'

'Pshaw, Rosa! What do you know about army movements? To hear you talk one would judge you to have been an old campaigner.'

'Ah, but you forget that you have taught me not only the history of your own military life, but you have told me much of ancient warriors—the victories of Alexander, the world's conqueror; the military exploits of Joan of Arc; the military operations of the Father of our country, George Washington; and there is not in history a battle or a manœuvre of Napoleon Bonaparte, but what I have read or heard from your own lips.'

'And can it be possible, Rosa, that your memory has treasured up all these things, which so much better become the knowledge of men than women?' asked the veteran officer with an expression of surprise.

'Those things which you love to know best most interest me; and I have listened to you so much on these topics, dear father, that I have not only learned much, but feel an interest in all military expeditions, particularly those of our own gallant army.'

'Well, Rosa, depend upon it these rumors are untrue.'

These words had scarcely escaped his lips, when the door-bell rang, and a servant soon ushered into the presence of the Major and his daughter, a young gentleman of noble and dignified mien, of about twenty-three years of age.

'Welcome, Clarence, welcome!' said the Major, as he arose and cordially shook the hand of a familiar acquaintance and formerly a neighbor of the Granville family—Clarence Clifton by name.

'You are quite a stranger, Mr. Clifton,' said Rosalia, taking his extended hand, while an extra tinge of crimson suffused her delicate cheeks. 'We are glad to welcome you to our village again; be seated.'

'Well, Clarence,' said the Major; 'I suppose you are just from York. What is the intelligence from the seat of war? Some vague rumors have reached us by this evening's mail.'

'The rumors at New York of yesterday, are not only fully confirmed, but instead of

one there have been two battles fought and two victories won!

'Glorious! This is news, indeed!' exclaimed the veteran with animation, and rising from his chair, rubbed and clapped his hands, and paced the room with extatic delight. 'You're sure it's no humbug, Clarence? You know these newspapers are such——'

'Oh, I'm positive it's true,' interrupted Clifton. 'Despatches have been received at Washington, direct from General Taylor.'

'There, father; did I not say it was quite probable, and yet you 'pshaw'd' at it?' said Rosa, playfully, pleased to see the Major in such unusually good spirits.

'Ah, you little hussy, you! you'd know more of military matters than your father, would you? This girl, Clarence, has fairly beaten an old soldier in her calculations,' said the Major, addressing the last sentence to the young man. 'But come, my boy, tell us the particulars.'

'The first battle was at Palo Alto on the 8th of May; the second at Resaca de la Palma on the 9th. But poor Ringgold——'

'Ringgold! the gallant Ringgold!' repeated the Major, his eyes gleaming with apprehension. 'Is he wounded?—is he a prisoner?—or is he——'

'Alas! he was killed in the heat of the conflict!'

'Then our rejoicing should be changed to mourning!' said the old soldier, as he wiped away a tear that glistened in his eye. 'Poor Ringgold—brave, gallant, generous, noble-hearted man—well, well, the bravest and best seem to be cut off first. I almost wish I had my commission again, but to fly to Mexico, and slay with my own right arm enough of these treacherous devils to avenge his death.'

'And sorry am I,' said Clifton, 'that I declined accepting the commission which was tendered me last autumn at West Point, at the time I graduated. Had I supposed that such an emergency as this could have

arisen, I surely should have accepted it; and I now, Major, have come to my native place, for no other purpose than to endeavor to raise a company of volunteers under the new requisition, and to obtain a captain's commission from the Governor. What think you of the project? I have come to ask your advice.'

'What think I of the project, Clarence?' ejaculated the Major. 'What should an old soldier think of it, when the country calls for the young and the brave to fly to arms! You shall not only have words of encouragement, but all the influence I possess shall be exercised in aiding you to carry your plans into effect.'

'Thanks! my generous friend!' said the young man, delighted beyond measure at having enlisted Granville's hearty co-operation. 'I will write to His Excellency, respecting a commission, this very night. To-morrow morning I will engage recruiting quarters—display the Star Spangled Banner at sunrise, and for a time disturb the quiet of this peaceful village with the martial sounds of the recruiting fife and drum.'

'Bravo! bravo!' exclaimed the Major; 'damme, it makes me feel at least ten years younger, just to think of these things again! Were it not for this slight lameness in my foot, caused by a shot from a cursed Seminole rifle—the infernal red-skins—I'd make an effort to raise a company myself. I would give a fortune to have the command of a company of dragoons, while this war lasts; or, for any field office, from a Sergeant-Major to a Major-General! any thing that I might be mounted, to hide this accursed game-leg gait of mine! I might—ay, it is very probable—I should have been a Brigadier by this time, had I not have thrown up my parchment.'

'Well, Major, I must bid you good evening,' said Clifton, rising to take his departure; 'and should be pleased to confer with you further to-morrow, or whenever it will best suit your convenience.'

'Leave us, Clarence? why, so hastily? you have but just come.'

'I must write to the Governor to-night; the mail leaves at——'

'Nonsense—I can't listen to it—where did you leave your baggage?'

'At the Evergreen Hotel!'

'Now make yourself perfectly easy—you shan't leave my house to-night! Here's your quarters! Damme, if you shall camp under any roof but mine in this burgh!—Here, Sam——'

'I thank you, Major, for your tendered hospitality, but——'

'Tut, tut, I can't listen to any buts,' interrupted Granville, and opening the door, cried out—'here, Sam! Pat! where in the devil are ye?'

'Ere I is, massa—did you call me, massa?' said black Sam, appearing at the door, and scratching his woolly pate.

'Yes, you thunder cloud! Where's Pat?'

'In de kitchen, 'long o' de cook, massa!'

'Call him hither, directly, you ace-of-spades, you!'

'Ees, sah! I'll fotch him along, massa!'

'No, by the powers, you won't, ye black divil, ye!' said Pat, also appearing. 'I'll be afther hilping meself. 'What 'ud yer 'onor's 'onor be afther wanting of yer 'onor's most obliging of sarvants,' continued the Irishman, bowing low to his master.

'None of your blarney, you bogtrotter, or I'll crack your skull with black Sam's co-coanut.'

'Yes, yer 'onor,' returned Pat.

'Oh, gorra, Massa!' exclaimed Sam, feeling of his ebony pate.

'Silence, you black rascal!' commanded the Major. 'Not another syllable out of either of your heads; but get you along, both of you, to the Evergreen Hotel, and bring hither Mr. Clifton's baggage. Do you hear, Sam?'

'Ees, sah; I duz, massa.'

'Do you hear, Pat?'

'Thunder and thurf, yer 'onor, I could hear if you didn't spake at all a'tall.'

'Well, then—Attention! Right Face! Double Quick Time! Forward!—March!'

The servants obeyed the martial orders given, and Pat and Sam vanished.

Clarence again attempted to remonstrate.

'Major,' said he, 'I have spoken for rooms and——'

'Tut, tut, what of it? I shall countermand the order. I have better quarters here than any of which the Evergreen can boast. Make no excuses; but consider yourself encamped under my roof until duty calls you abroad.'

Clifton perceiving that there was no chance of arguing the point with the Major, made no farther objections, but thought best to reconcile himself to the unexpected solicitations of his military friend.

The residue of that evening was spent in lively conversation, principally upon the exciting events of the 8th and 9th of May.—Neither seemed more happy than the fair Rosalia, whose sparkling wit, vivacity, and general knowledge quite captivated the embryo hero. She secretly rejoiced that the handsome youth was to be domicilled for a time under the same roof with her: for she felt that his society would break the general monotony of the village. Granville Cottage had never been quite so lively a residence as she could have desired.

The evening quickly passed away, and Clifton was escorted to the apartment assigned him by the Major himself. He retired to rest—but not to sleep—a vision, in the shape of a beautiful girl, haunted his imagination. According to his pre-conceived standard of female loveliness and excellence, he had seen and conversed on that evening, with one that would bear a maximum test. He had scanned every feature with the scrutiny of a sculptor, and found them perfect; he had marked her figure, and saw naught but beauty and symmetry—its every movement natural and graceful; he had noted

her musical voice—a syren's could not have been more enchanting; he had heard from her sweet lips words of wisdom, sallies of wit and humor, smiles of joy and gladness; he had seen a tear of pity in her eye for the gallant dead, and a ray of hope beam from her expressive countenance for the gallant living. All these things he had seen blended in one fair creature—in the person of Rosalia Granville! He wondered that these qualities had never struck him before—he had met her often—but two years had fled since then. The young man did not realize he change which two years often makes in

young maidens of a particular age. He reflected that he had never felt any great interest in any young lady until now—and he could not, he dared not believe that he did in her—but, at all events, he acknowledged himself singularly affected. There was a chord touched in his heart that had never vibrated before; yet he could not have defined or described the peculiar sensations which thrilled pleasingly to his very heart.

It was near morning before he could persuade himself to sleep—and when he did sleep, he dreamed of—Rosalia Granville!



CHAPTER II.

The Recruiting Station. The Village in a state of Excitement. Wonder what it's all about. Clifton's First Trial at Recruiting. No Success. The Major comes to the Rescue. A Patriotic Speech and Yankee Doodle 'does up' the Business. 'The Work goes Bravely on.' The First Drill. Discouragement of the Recruiting Officer. 'There's Fight in Every Mother's Son of 'em.'



HE second morning it was, after Clarence Clifton's arrival, that the peaceable citizens of ———, were thrown suddenly into a state of excitement, the why and wherefore had not yet penetrated their agricultural noddles. It was not the Seventeenth-o'-June, nor the Fourth-o'-July, nor Washington's Birth Day, nor any other holiday that the good people of that 'burgh' had ever heard of; yet there were the 'stars and stripes' waving as proudly and gracefully as they ever did on Independence Day, from the top of the liberty-pole, in the square, directly in front of the 'Evergreen'; and as plainly distinguishable to their optics as the sun which was just rising above the reach-pole of Deacon Powell's barn; a thing unrecorded in the town annals since the last war with the mother country.

The old people and the young people, the masculine and the feminine, looked at the waving ensign with wondering eyes; the parson of the parish, on being told of the singular event, put on his goggles and came forth to be convinced of that which his incredulity would not admit. For two hours had the object of their curiosity been unfurled to the breeze, and the mystery remained unsolved. Some suggested that the Presi-

dent, or the Governor, or the Major General, or some other important functionary might have arrived during the night; but on a second thought this could not be, for there was no carriage in the Evergreen yard—no strange horses in the stable; and the mail-coach, which was due but semi-weekly, had arrived the night previous with but one passenger, and he was a beardless youth. One little boy, with a red head and a 'thquinting' vision, 'guethed ath how the Thircuth wath coming;' another, who wanted to 'see the Elephant,' reckoned it must be that two-tailed quadruped; and a third thought possibly that an extra 'Fourth-o'-July' might have been appointed, and gingerbread, candy, and egg-pop, naturally popped into his patriotic imagination. The landlord of the 'Evergreen' pretended to know something—looked wise, but kept mum; even he, however, did not really comprehend the matter, but he knowingly winked at one or two of his familiar acquaintances—his most profitable 'bar' customers. He gave them to understand, by shakes, nods and winks, that—

'We know; or, we could and if we would; or, if we list to speak,'

but not a word did he utter.

Thus things remained until about ten o'clock, when the ears of the 'wondering,'

'reckoning,' and 'guessing' villagers were startled by the quick, stirring tap-tap and roll of a drum, accompanied by shrill and piercing strains of a fife. Toward the front door of the 'Evergreen' all eyes were brought to a focus. From it marched forth Clarence Clifton, with a drawn sword in his hand, followed by a drummer and fifer, and a tall, homespun looking plough-boy, who used his best endeavors, though without success, to keep step with the enlivening and warlike strains.

The villagers' astonishment increased—they looked more mysterious than ever. They had seen these instruments at 'gineral musters' and 'May trainings,' at the head of the 'sogers,' but all of them declared that they had never seen anything so 'dod-rotted mean' as a company of 'trainers' of 'ony jest' four persons, including captain, drummer and fifer.

Clifton, without taking any particular notice of the curious assemblage, marched his music and his solitary recruit, up and down the principal avenue, and through every by-path of the village, where a human habitation could be discerned, and in the course of an hour and a half halted at the 'Evergreen' without any augmentation of his force. He sheathed his sword, took off his cap, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and gave a look of contempt at the score or two of corn-fed, beef-devouring, hardy-looking young fellows, who stood gaping upon him with astonishment and wonder.

'Wall, I'm darn'd if I hain't conclewed that that faller's een jest crazy,' remarked Sy Sickles, a hale, hearty specimen of a Yankee plough-boy, to his comrades. 'What on airth can the critter mean, enny haow? 'Taint the Fourth-o'-July, nor the day that General Washington was born in, nor no day of that ere sort or kind, but a plain working day; and don't you see there's the school-marm jest calling the boys and gals inter the school-us. It beats all natur—I can't make head nor tail to it, I vummy I can't.'

This and several similar remarks were made while Clifton's eye was upon them, a portion of which fell upon his ear. Presently Major Granville appeared, who, as the curious assemblage hoped, would explain the why and wherefore of this unheard of manoeuvring in their usually quiet and orderly village.

The Major stepped up to Clarence, and they exchanged salutes, *a la militaire*.

'Well, Clifton,' said the veteran; 'what are the prospects? any enlistments, eh?'

'None,' said the youth, despairingly; 'I might have known better than to have made the attempt to raise a company here. Would to Heaven they had a little of that patriotic spirit which once animated the souls of their grandfathers. I have marched my music all through the town, and they have followed and gaped at me as if I were the clown of a circus company.'

'And is that all you have done?' enquired the Major.

'What more could I have done?'

'Made them a speech.'

'That would not have moved them.'

'I tell you it would—do it now—give them something patriotic—talk of glory, blood and thunder!—give it to 'em strong—nothing else will animate their hearts.'

'If the eloquence of the fife and drum fail to move them, I fear that mortal lips would move them less.'

'And have you not spoken to them at all?'

'Not a syllable.'

'Nor explained your object?'

'Not in words—I have marched up and down the street, beating-up for volunteers—what more can be necessary?'

'Pooh! much more—never 'll do in the world,' replied the Major, with animation; 'I'll wager my best chapeau that there is not one of those verdant gentlemen, who have even the most distant idea of your object.'

'Can it be possible?'

'Possible?—yes—anything stupid is possible in this place—of that I'll convince you.'

I'll enlighten these dumb statues myself—I'll give them a touch of my eloquence in your behalf. They already look upon me as the Sir Oracle of the village. Come, strike up Yankee Doodle, Hail Columbia, Star Spangled Banner—anything stirring, and escort me to the green. I'll see what can be done for you.'

Clifton followed Granville's instructions—the fife and drum struck up a patriotic march, and Clifton escorted the Major directly among the wondering crowd. A chair was brought from the 'Evergreen,' and placed at the foot of the flag-staff, and while the fife and drum performed a salute, Granville mounted the chair, took off his hat, and in the politest manner possible, solicited the attention of the audience to a few brief remarks which he deemed it his duty to make to them.

Dumb and almost breathless seemed the crowd before him, while he explained the object of his young and gallant military friend—he expatiated at length of the glory to be gained upon the tented field—dwelt feelingly upon the country's need of aid from the young and valiant to bring the war to a glorious termination—gave a most thrilling description of the two great battles which had already been fought and won by their ever-conquering countrymen—in glowing language he dwelt upon the patriotism and valor of their lamented sires and grandsires in their two great struggles with Great Britain; and concluded by entreating the stalwart and noble youths to imitate their glorious example and enlist under the victorious banner in this great crisis, when the country stood so much in need of their services!

Defeaning were the shouts and hurrahs which immediately succeeded the last words of the veteran's patriotic harangue. The effort was successful—the victory complete!

And now the suddenly elated Clifton, followed by some fifteen or twenty verdant but stalwart plough-boys, was again parading up

and down the town, much to the annoyance of all nervous old women, and affright of geese, ducks, hens, turkeys, and other barn-yard accompaniments.

The 'Evergreen' on that day presented an unusually busy appearance. The spark of patriotism now kindled within a few soon electrified nearly all the young men within a league's distance around the village, and they hurried in to the recruiting rendezvous to prove to the world that they were no cowards and not recreant to their duty when the country calls 'To Arms!'

At the setting of the sun on that day of extreme excitement, Clifton had the glorious satisfaction of finding on his enlistment roll forty-six men—good and true—raw recruits indeed—but just the right sort of material to endure the hardships of a campaign and to make good soldiers of—and, in truth, the very class of men who achieved our country's independence.

Before it was yet dark our self-made recruiting officer drew up his men in as straight a line as could be expected, and gave them a furlough of three days. At the end of which time, he told them that he should expect every man to answer to his name at the call of the roll; and, moreover to have all their private matters arranged, preparatory to marching for Mexico.

Elated with the idea of being a soldier, and filled with enthusiasm and excitement at the bold step they had taken, they dispersed to their several homes to acquaint their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sweethearts and wives, of the glorious act that they had that day performed, and of the sacrifice they were about to make for the good of their country!

If ever a hubbub was suddenly kicked up in any community it was effected in this hitherto peaceful village! It would require the pages of an octavo volume to give in detail the remonstrances of both stern and tender-hearted parents; the gentle persuasions of loving sisters; the bluff and grouchy growls

of elder brothers; the hair-pulling of vixen spouses; and the earnest, the gentle and tearful entreaties of loving, amiable and pretty sweethearts.

Had the whole village been set on fire, the effect of this strange and sudden resolution of the young men, could not have had a more inflammable effect upon that sect, who are fortunately and perhaps necessary exempt from fighting their country's battles, or performing even the duties of a soldier in times of peace.

However, remonstrances, entreaties, pulling hair, or growling had no effect; and even tears from the soft blue eyes of the village belle, whose lover had enlisted, were of no avail. If one was released, thought the young recruiting officer, all might desire to be.

The three days' furlough having expired, one by one, slowly and reluctantly, began to assemble the raw recruits, with their patriotic ardor half cooled. Although it was not required, nearly all of them bore upon their shoulders either an old musket, a rifle, or a fowling-piece. Those who possessed not these weapons, had availed themselves of cutlasses, swords or pistols, which looked antique and rusty enough to have served thro' the revolutionary campaign. Thus they appeared armed and equipped—for many had shot pouches and powder horns—contrary to the wishes or expectations of their recruiting officer; who, by unanimous consent they acknowledged as captain, though he had not as yet received a commission.

After calling them into line he told them that arms, equipments, and uniform would be furnished them by government, and that they might leave all weapons and accoutrements at home. This announcement gave pretty general satisfaction, but it called forth from the ranks one Ezekiel Short, an overgrown youth, who stood six feet four inches in his stockings, and who held firmly in his hand a ducking gun, the barrel of which was nearly as long as himself.

'Well, Capen, I think I mought as well go hum,' said long Zeke; 'can't be of no use, no haow.'

'Why, what's the matter?' inquired Clifton.

'That's a pooty question for yeou to ask. Didn't you say jeast naow, that we must leave our guns at hum? Now, one raison I had in 'listin, was to have a chance some day or 'nuther to try the quality o' my duck-in' gun on some o' them are thunderin' black whiskered Mexikins. You see, capen, I'm used to this ere shootin' iron; I'll be fly-blown if there's another like it between here and Satan's kingdom! It is the same identical critter that my old grandsir fit and bled with at the Concord Fight! That gun won the prize last squirrel hunt, and I was rather calkerlatin' on doing the same sort o' thing when we get out huntin' arter those tarnal crazy Mexikins.'

The officer made no reply, but unwilling to lose so fine a specimen of fighting timber, took Zeke aside and hinted to him that all should be right in regard to the ducking gun if he would seemingly acquiesce.—Zeke took his place in the ranks again without his gun, which seemed to satisfy two or three others who had calculated upon enlisting their favorite weapons as well as their bodies for the campaign.

Clifton now commenced drilling his raw recruits in the school of the soldier, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he at length made them understand that a soldier's duties embraced something more than to load, take aim and fire! It was an awkward piece of work—that first drill—but Clifton, not again despairing, kept his men in a line—rather a zig-zag one to be sure—for upwards of three hours. And at the end of that time every man could tell his left foot from his right, and knew the meaning of 'eyes right,' 'left dress,' etc.

However, all things considering (military enthusiasm being at a very low ebb in that section of the country) the raw recruits

gave pretty strong indications that they were just the right sort of boys 'to go a Mexican hunting' as they termed it.

The only thing mortifying to our young hero, on this occasion, was, to observe, after he had dismissed his command and faced right-about, that Major Granville and the beautiful, blue-eyed Rosalia had been silent spectators of the manœuvres of his corps in his first attempt to instruct them. The moment his eye was caught they could not refrain from giving vent to the gleeful feelings which the ludicrous appearance and awkward actions of the tyro soldiers had excited within them.

Clifton looked abashed and his cheeks were red with mortification; but the Major observing his trepidation and instantly divining the cause, stepped towards him and extended his hand, saying—

'Excellent! brave! a noble beginning! Do not feel so down-hearted, Clarence. I'll pledge my honor as an old soldier, that no company of recruits, raised in this state, would prove a match for them. There's fight in every mother's son of 'em! I can see it in their eyes!'

'But they make such an outrageously ridiculous appearance, that I am almost tired of the task I have began,' remarked Clifton.

'Tut, tut, persevere,' pursued Granville, 'you'll soon mould them to your will by patient drilling.'

'I'm sure they obeyed your orders with considerable precision,' chimed in Miss Rosalia, 'considering that they know as little of the military art as old Parson Lambton.'

'Of course we must allow a Major's daughter to be a proper judge of soldierlike bearing,' said Clarence, bowing, and with a light touch of irony in his mode of speech.

'Oh, sir,' returned Rosalia, 'it requires not to be a Major's daughter to tell a soldier from a civilian at a glance—to tell a hawk from a peacock is not a whit easier.'

'Ah, ha, ha! well done, Rosa! a gallant retort and a close shot!' said Granville; but,

Clarence, you must n't mind my little military prodigy in petticoats. If she could have her own way the days of Amazonian heroism would be revived. I wouldn't have believed that she knew much more of army movements than my 'kitchen colonel,' if she had'n't, the other evening, have completely distanced my calculations in regard to the movements of our forces on the Rio Grande. She anticipated the truth, while I declared it all moonshine.'

'Indeed,' replied Clarence, facetiously; 'perhaps Miss Granville would like to enlist in my raw company; I can make her a corporal, and her gallantry may be the means of her promotion.'

'Enlist in your corps? ha, ha!' laughed Rosalia; 'you esteem me lightly, methinks. Better use your influence to make me your colonel.'

'A powder-boy, rather,' retorted Clifton, good humoredly.

'You would find me much less afraid of explosive material than you are, I'll engage.'

'After an engagement, ladies are very useful in mending up the little eyelet holes, made by the sharp-shooters.'

'Ah! I'll agree to sew up all that may occur in your corps; you'll not hazard their precious lives, I'll warrant, within point blank distance of a thirty-two pounder!'

'Come, come—a truce to this jesting,' said the Major. 'Let's make a retreat for home, Rosy. Clarence I shall soon expect you at the cottage.'

'Remember, Captain Clifton, (she emphasized the title,) 'that we take our tea early.'

'Will you promise to aim the 'paper-bullets' of your brain at something else?' said Clifton.

'I can't promise; you are such a capital target I love to shoot at you.'

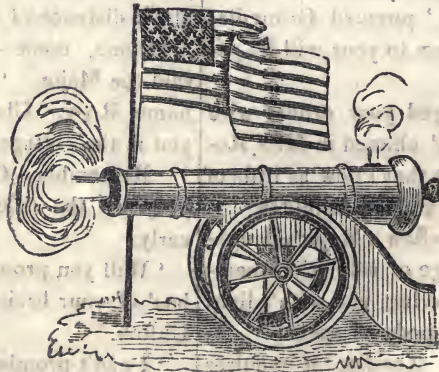
'I think I shall survive all the wounds you may chance to make. You may expect me in good season,' said Clifton, as he returned the parting salute of his friends.

Now the reader might very naturally infer from the character of the conversation we have listened to from Clarence and Rosalia, that such a thing as a mutual love did not exist in their hearts; but such is not the true state of the case—Cupid sometimes plays such unaccountable antics that lovers cannot always put confidence in him. The truth is, that Clifton, the more he listened to Rosalia's lively sallies, ironical though they often were, the more he thought of her wondrous charms; and to say the truth she was far from being indifferent to him.

Without tarrying longer in the quiet village, which we have for a short time much disturbed, we must onward to the Battle Fields of Mexico, leaving our hero and his raw recruits to get there as best they may.

One thing, however, we may as well state. When Clifton arrived at New Orleans about four weeks after the events already narrated, he was surprised and pleased to learn that

his company of volunteers were to be mounted as soon as they could reach the Rio del Norte, and to form part of a battalion of Light Dragoons which was to be formed from the several volunteer corps. He was yet more surprised to learn that his friend, Major Granville, had actually received and accepted a Colonel's commission, and to have the command of the new battalion of Light Dragoons, and, moreover, that he was daily expected at New Orleans, from thence to proceed immediately to the seat of war. When Clifton's surprise had subsided, the first query which entered his mind, was, whether or not Rosalia Granville would accompany her father to Mexico? He was well convinced in his own mind that it would not be owing to any disinclination on her part if she had not set out with him. Of this we shall satisfy our readers in a future chapter.



CHAPTER III.

A Troop of Mexican Cavalry. Canales, the notable Ranchero Chieftain. His Lieutenant. Arrival at the Rancho of Senor Espindola. A beautiful Mexican Senorita, concerning whom there is more mystery than will be revealed in this chapter. A new feature in Modern Warfare. Elvira's Curiosity.



O MEXICO—poor, unhappy Mexico—we would convey the reader 'at one stride, without being necessitated to stop here and there for an incident to render the chain of our story complete.

Ten days prior to the ever-memorable siege of MONTEREY, and at the distance of about three leagues from the captured city, a small party of cavaliers suddenly dashed across a well travelled mule path, by which the Sierra Madre is passed, and entered a smaller path leading through a forest of trees of a larger growth than is usually met with in that section of the republic. As soon as the wood completely concealed them from the view of any party who might be toiling up the mule path towards the mountain pass, they slackened their speed, and rode on slowly until they issued into a plain of some three hundred acres, the locality of the *rancho* of one Senor Espindola, a worthy who will enact a subordinate part in some of the scenes which we shall hereafter describe. Here the cavaliers halted, and dismounting their jaded beasts, each began to perform the duties of ostler, with the exception of two rather conspicuous individuals, who in fact were the first two officers of this band of rather suspicious

looking individuals, and of whom we shall endeavor to give a brief description.

The chief was a tall, well-proportioned man, of about forty years of age, with small, piercing black eyes; his cheeks, chin and upper lip, were nearly covered with a sleek, black beard, which appeared as if never neglected at the toilet. His teeth were regular and white, which he displayed to advantage whenever he spoke or smiled. The expression of his face, however, was naturally severe, and now disappointment, scorn, hatred and revenge were added. His costume bespoke him a man of wealth, with no ordinary share of vanity and pride—his *chaqueta* of green velvet was richly bedizened with cord and lace of gold; his vest embroidered with gold and silver thread; his trousers, of the same material as his jacket, were made full and fastened around his ankle, *a la Turque*. By his side hung a naked blade, a cut-throat looking weapon, bearing a much closer resemblance to a bowie-knife—though much longer—than to any other instrument manufactured for men-slaying that we are acquainted with. A pair of huge horse-pistols were in the holsters of his saddle, and in his right hand he bore a heavy lance, the indispensable weapon of a Mexican mounted soldier. His figure was grace-

ful withal, and were it not for the noted paseness of his character, he might have passed for a gentleman of distinction. It was Don Rodriguez Canales—holding the commission of a General; but acting as the Chief of the most notorious body of Rancheros in Mexico.

His lieutenant, or first subordinate, was similarly though less gaudily attired, but instead of a naked blade at his side, he wore a less savage looking weapon, resembling a cuirassier's sabre, and instead of a slouched hat and plumes, like his chief's, his head was covered by the ordinary broad-brimmed Mexican sombrero, with the addition of a wide green ribbon, the ends of which hung over his left shoulder and fastened to a button-hole of his chaqueta. Don Julianó Rosas was the name by which he was known, though it was intimated that he was an adventurer from a certain country he was compelled to leave, to avoid that most horrible of all deaths—a public strangulation. Don Julianó was a villain of a deeper dye than even his master; he was not more than thirty years of age, but he was much older in crime; pretended to be a Spanish West Indian, though he had never seen one of the West Indian Isles; he could speak Spanish with considerable fluency, though an old Castilian might have easily detected that there was not a drop of Spanish blood in his veins. He had gained the confidence of his chief, by scrupulously obeying orders that a man of the slightest honor would have revolted from. Yet, Don Julianó could boast of a handsome figure, and an agreeable countenance; he could ever be pleasing among his companions, and even among the fair senoritas; but little did they know of the devil which reigned within him.

The remainder of the band, nearly a hundred and fifty in number, were poorly clad, but well armed; altogether they were as shabbyroon and cut-throat a looking troop of knaves as ever robbed a caravan or pillaged a church.

'A bloody days work we've had of it, Senor Capitan,' remarked Don Julianó, addressing Canales.

'Si,' answered the notable chieftain, of whose acts the American people have heard so much, 'but,' continued he, with a hellish grin on his features, 'this day's defeat has only served to whet my anger; and now that my blood is roused I swear vengeance upon the head of every d——d *Americano* who falls into the power of Canales! I will hunt them so long as one treads within our boundaries! I will neither show quarter or engage them in honorable combat! Hereafter, whenever our lances shall draw even one drop of blood from their bodies, death shall be the consequence more certain than if bitten by the envenomed tongue of the deadly serpent!

'Ah, Senor Capitan, what mean you?' ejaculated Julianó, not exactly relishing a part of Canales' speech.

'See that the men are well quartered, and then come to my quarters. I'll unfold to thee my plan there. Rouse up old Espindola—he has not unbarred the door yet.'

'Halloo! halloo! Senor Espindola! halloo!' shouted the lieutenant, at the same time rapping lustily upon the door with his sword.

The summons was soon answered by the appearance at the threshold of an old man of three score years, who was gaping and rubbing his eyes as it just awakened from a sound sleep.

'A pretty time for sleep, Senor Espindola,' resumed the lieutenant, 'it is not much past mid-day.'

'Ah, Don Julianó,' replied the old man, 'I knew that was thy wagish tongue; methinks when thou hast lived over sixty harvests, thou wilt find a quiet siesta quite refreshing even at this hour. I know 'tis not, and Heaven knows 'tis not.'

'Well, well, bestir thyself old man, and prepare a feast for Captain Canales and myself, while our troop are doing the same

thing for themselves. Move sprightly—we have had a severe day's work and not a morsel of refreshment since sunrise.'

'The best that we have shall be thine; and that's good enough for any grandee in Mexico. But what meanest thou by a severe day's work, lieutenant? My old eyes tell me that all has not gone right with thee.'

'True; we have lost thirty men to day—mostly killed.'

'*Dios de Cielo!*' exclaimed the old man with a look of pious horror. 'Thou and thy troop must have been battling the barbarians!'

'Yes; only they battled us with a vengeance! I believe we have encountered this day the accursed Texan Rangers, under that dare-devil, McCullough; but don't ask me any questions. Tell me, where is Donna Elvira? She is not napping, too, is she?'

'Ah! bless her bright eyes! they are never closed while the sun shines above the horizon.'

'Why, then, is she not here?'

'She teased me to let her go to the village and spend the day with the daughter of Senor Martini, who is celebrating her birth-day by having a juvenile fandango. All the lads and lasses of her acquaintance were invited. So I could not refuse my darling Elvira—She will return, I'll warrant me, when the sun gets below the mountain top.'

'Senor Espindola;' said Julianio, 'I have a word for thee, privately, concerning Elvira, when a good opportunity occurs.'

'I cannot object to that, good lieutenant; but mark me well, Donna Elvira is not for thee; therefore, importune me no more on that point. I have told thee often, that when thou couldst gain her consent, mine should follow; but I know she loves thee not.'

'Perchance her mind will change, and she will yet give heed to my protestations of love.'

'Ah, Don Julianio, believe it not—I have lived long in the world—I have studied well

the hearts of women—there's danger in attempting to change or coerce them when once fixed. But, I'm losing time—*tortillas* must be cooked, or I cannot serve thee as gallant cavaliers should be served.'

Having made this reply Espindola entered the house; and at the time predicted, the sparkling black-eyed, black-haired Senorita Elvira Espindola, came tripping with sylph-like grace into the apartment where her father—who seemed more worthy to be called her grandfather—was preparing a repast for the Ranchero Chief and his lieutenant.'

'Ah, Elvira; I am glad thou hast come so promptly, for my guests have returned, and we have a repast to serve them.'

'Oh, father,' said the vivacious Elvira; 'I have had right merry sport to day; we have had such a gay fandango; and I have seen the great general, Ampudia, and his grand army of soldiers, who, they say, are going to kill or drive all the 'Yonkese' out of Mexico. They are now marching toward Monterey, where they mean to give them such a whipping, if they dare show their heads.'

'Nonsense, child—Ampudia is a coward! If he's to command the troops another defeat is certain. Pity it is the heroic Canales, who is our guest, is not at their head.'

'I don't like Canales' looks, father.'

'Why not, my child?'

'Because he seems too much like a robber.'

'What think'st thou of Don Julianio Rosas?'

'I like him no better, father.'

'Prithee, why?'

'He teases me too much—talks love and such silly nonsense to me—you know I can't bear it. Then, too, I believe he's not what he professes to be—I fear he's a hypocrite, therefore, I like him not.'

'By San Maria, good reasons and strong! Then, Elvira, beware of him—he will not submit to thy scorn tamely. I regard him somewhat suspiciously, too; he hath an oily tongue, and may do thee harm.'

'I fear him not; neither do I fear Roderiguez——'

'Hush, my child,' interrupted the old man, as Canales with a lofty stride intruded himself into their presence.

Elvira immediately left the room.

'Senor Espindola,' said the chieftain;—'I have something to say to thee in private. After dark come to my apartment, and see that there be no listeners.'

'*Santa Maria!*' exclaimed the old man; 'thou, too, canst not want my daughter? Wert thou the most magnificent grandee in the Republic, I could not permit it—the Holy Church would not sanction it; for, if I have heard aright, thou hast one wife to love and cherish already—never'll do—can't listen to it——'

'Old man, what canst thou be prating about?'

'Of my daughter—she never shall be wedded unless with the sanction of the Holy Church—as I said before——'

'Nonsense—I have too weighty matters in hand to think of silly maidens.'

'Oh, ho! then it isn't of my daughter thou would'st speak? I ought to have known better—to be sure I had—well, I am an old——'

'Fool!' thundered the chief, almost enraged.

'True, Senor; I was on the point of imparting to thee that information when thou didst interrupt me.'

'Thou knowest my wish?'

'Si, Senor; I am thy humble servant, and wilt obey.'

The chieftain retired to his own quarters, whither we shall soon follow him. Donna Elvira again rejoined her father. In fact she had not hied so far away, but that every word which Canales had uttered had fallen upon her. She was not a premeditated listener to this conversation, but accidentally hearing her own name mentioned, she very reasonably concluded that she had an interest in the conversation, and of course had a

right to be an auditor; and what young lady would not have reasoned as she did, and acted as she had acted, under like circumstances? She did not allude to what she had heard to her father. Oh, no; she had too much good sense for that; besides, her curiosity was aroused, and there was to be a very private interview between her father and the chief upon a very important matter. She resolved, whatever it might be, that it should be no secret to her!

The feast prepared for the Ranchero leaders having been despatched, these worthies retired to the suite of apartments occupied by the former. Their conversation thus far had been upon the losses they had sustained in their last engagement with the Americans.

'How bear our men this defeat, Julianio?' asked Canales, pursuing the subject.

'With loud curses and dread oaths of vengeance!' answered the lieutenant. 'Had they encountered a legion of devils, commanded by the arch fiend himself, instead of this squadron of wild Texans, they could not have been more amazed or more terribly routed!'

'True; I'd rather have fought a treble number of Apache savages than these impetuous 'northern barbarians'; but, Julianio, we must change our mode of fighting them, or in every conflict defeat is certain. We must regard them henceforth as only savages, and fight them accordingly. I hinted to thee a plan which I have been cogitating upon, which will render our force invincible engaged with even a much superior power, in point of numbers. Thou art aware, Julianio, that in action we inflict many wounds but seldom kill?'

'I have remarked it.'

'Hereafter, we may possess ourselves of the power to render every wound, ay, every scratch, as mortal, as if the weapon's point drew blood from the heart.'

'Go on, Senor; whilst thy words surprise me they give me new hope.'

'There is a simple shrub, to be found in the chapparals, from the root of which can be distilled a deadly liquid!'

'Poison, Senor?'

'Si, poison! or, call it what thou wilt, so potent is it that were I to dip this dagger's keen point into the liquid, and with it but scratch the flesh of any part of my body, so that it but tear the skin, in two hours afterwards I should be a corpse!'

'Incredible!'

'I will yet give thee proof.'

'I will not doubt thee; but it is wonderful.'

'Suppose, Juliano, we were to procure this subtle poison, and with it envenom every lance of our troop?' said the chieftain, enquiringly.

'Such a course might meet with the disapproval of our great general, Don Lopez de Santa Anna.'

'I'm not quite so sure of that, Juliano. Santa Anna is not unlike ourselves; he's a public robber, and we do a little private business in the same way. At all events we can try the experiment, and keep the secret to ourselves.'

'By all means, Senor; but how can this venomous liquid be obtained?'

'We must let our host, old Espindola, in to the secret.'

'I fear we might fail there; the old man is too conscientious.'

'A fig for his conscience!' said Canales snapping his finger. 'I have that which will make it bend to anything. The old man loves gold, and let me but jingle a purse of it in his ear, and he will obey my bidding as readily as if I were the archbishop of Mexico. He has promised to meet me here within this hour, and through him I can easily obtain the poison.'

'He may himself be ignorant of it. I am not aware of ever having heard even mentioned this venomous root.'

'Neither did I know of it, until old Espindola, in telling me one of his marvellous

tales about the Spanish conquest, wherein he spoke of a deadly poison known to the Aztecs. Ultimately I questioned him closely in regard to it, but he seemed somewhat averse at first to satisfying my curiosity; finally, he confessed that he knew where to obtain the root from which the poison is distilled; had seen its potency tested; and had heard the use to which the Aztec warriors applied it, which was in envenoming the barbs of their arrows, points of spears, knives, and other sharp pointed weapons. He, moreover told me that he knew of but one individual in the Republic, besides himself, who understood the process of distilling it from the root.'

'Is it not possible,' enquired Juliano, 'to obtain it without giving Espindola the least intimation as to the purpose to which we propose to apply it.'

'It is possible; but the old fox is pretty shrewd, and we must beware that through his eagle eye he does not read our intentions. Ah, I hear the old man's footsteps. He is true to his promise.'

'Then I will beat a retreat; and whilst he is detained here, I'll improve the opportunity by making love to the angelic Senorita, who calls him father.'

No sooner had Juliano retreated through one door than the Senor Espindola entered the other.

'Thy punctuality is to be commended,' said Canales. 'Be seated, and without any preface I will at once inform thee of the nature of the errand for which I summoned thee hither. What is the name of the poisonous root to be found in our chapparals, Espindola?'

'The poisonous root?' repeated the old man, as if in deep thought. 'Didst thou say poisonous?'

'Si, Senor; thou'rt dull of comprehension, methinks. I mean that of which thou told'st me.'

'When?' continued Espindola, with feigned wonder.

'A short time since, while narrating one of thy wild and most improbable romances—come, come, you remember—it was during my last tarry here.'

'Ah, ah—true,' said the old man, as if the matter had that instant popped into his brain. 'You see, Senor, as old age creeps on, the memory waxeth dull.'

'Ridiculous nonsense!' uttered Canales, with impatience. 'Tell me at once of this poisonous root!' he demanded.

'I know of no other name for it than that of *yerbas venenoso*.'

'I think thou didst tell me it was not generally known.'

'True, Senor.'

'Can it be obtained readily? I have immediate use for a large quantity of it.'

'Dios de Cielo! I trust my honored guest intends it not for himself?'

'Never fear for me, Espindola.'

'But—'

'Ask me no questions—the poison I must and will have. Wilt thou obtain it for me?'

'Consider, Senor.'

'Make no objections—obey my bidding, and here is gold for thee!' Canales placed in his hands a purse of Spanish coin.

'For my Elvira's sake I will accept the

treasure and obey thy will; but I trust—'

'Trust to naught else save thy prayers;' interrupted the chief, 'and execute thy commission forthwith.'

'Thy will is law. Early, to-morrow, I will bring thee the poisonous liquid,' and the old man left the apartment.

As we have previously intimated, a certain third person resolved to know the why and wherefore of this premeditated meeting. During the entire conversation she had so concealed herself as to be within hearing distance. The whole plot was now no secret to her. She knew much that had not been revealed to her father, but had been imparted to her hateful lover. But the discovery she had made was other than agreeable to her feelings: the true character of the band who had made Espindola's *ranch* their head quarters, was now fully understood. She trembled in every limb and muscle to think of the horrible sacrifice of life contemplated by Canales. But there was one bright thought which finally gleamed upon her mind. She recollected of having heard, as well as the Ranchero Chieftain, her father speak of this subtle poison; but she had heard much more—a full description of a safe and certain antidote!

CHAPTER IV.

A deep Barranca, and a Remarkable Glen. First Appearance of our Hero's corps of Light Dragoons. The party of Reconnoissance. Lt. Ezekiel Short—or Long Short. Awkward predicament of Zeke and his party. The Flag of Truce.—Zeke a prisoner.



BRIGHT sun—a clear atmosphere, and an unclouded sky, made beautiful the 14th of September, 1846, a few days only previous to the storming of Monterey. At a distance of not more than two leagues from the city, on the road leading to Guadalupe, there is a narrow barranca, through which the road passes. Before it terminates on the higher ground, there is a still narrower pass, or glen it may be more properly termed, walled on either side, almost perpendicularly, by jagged rocks. So high are these natural walls, together with the shrubbery which shoots out on both sides along up the craggy steep, interlacing its branches and leaves together, that the sun's rays, even at meridian, never penetrate this remarkable gorge, which has to be passed by all who journey upon that road. So narrow is it at this point, that but one loaded mule or mounted cavalier can go through at a time. Running parallel with the path is a gurgling brook, whose waters bubble forth from a fissure in the rock half way up the steep, and come tumbling down over a succession of jutting crags until they reach their bed, forming as pretty a cascade as the lover of nature's wonders could desire. A

little basin has been formed where the water falls, where man and beast can slake their thirst after crossing the arid plan stretching out to the north and east.

On the morning of which we have spoken, just as the sun had tinged with her rays the peaks of the Sierra Madre, a company of United States Light Dragoons, mounted on fleet and well caparisoned steeds, entered the narrow ravine, of which we have given a brief description. Their uniform was of light blue, with scarlet trimmings; cloth caps, also blue, but darker, with an eagle of gilt in front, surmounting gilt letters, designating the arm of service to which they belonged. They numbered about eighty strong, and to a practised military eye they would have been accounted a formidable body of men. Their arms consisted of the usual cavalry sword; a short rifle, slung upon their backs; and in the holsters of their saddles a pair of ordinary horse pistols. Apparently these were their only means of defence, and seemed quite sufficient to cope with the pistols, small escopetas and lances, usually carried by Mexican lancers: but this corps of Dragoons, had yet another weapon, small and even insignificant looking, but nevertheless in close conflict with an enemy

far more effective and destructive than all others which they bore. Beneath each jacket, on the left side, in a pocket purposely made, was a six-barrelled revolver, which, according to strict orders, was never to be displayed, except when closely engaged, and when defeat seemed inevitable.

The commander of this strongly armed and well accoutred troop, was a tall, graceful man, whose fair countenance indicated that scarcely twenty-four years had passed over his head. To save description, we may as well again introduce the reader to our friend, Clarence Clifton, and to his bold looking company of cavaliers, which, with the exception of some twenty he had enlisted at New Orleans, were the identical plowboys, who had stared at him, and wondered 'what it mought be all about,' when he first disturbed the peace of their village with the recruiting fife and drum. He rode a noble looking horse with singular grace and ease, and, although the animal occasionally paved the earth, and pranced about, yet the cavalier sat as easily in his saddle, with loosened rein, as if horse and rider had never parted company. By the side of Captain Clifton, rode a still younger man—one who had scarcely passed from youth to manhood—of light frame, and a countenance, were it not sunbrowned by recent exposure, would have been called effeminate; indeed, he looked far better fitted to grace a ball-room than face the cannon's mouth on the field of battle. Henry Allston—for this was the youthful officer's name—was a recent graduate of the U. S. Military Academy, and held a commission of second lieutenant, though he acted as first in Clifton's corps. The third commissioned officer was none other than Ezekiel Short—Long Zeke, or Long Short, as he was commonly called—he, of the long 'duckin'-gun,' which weapon he was finally persuaded to leave behind, on being promoted to his present dignity. His great length made him appear rather awkwardly when mounted, but he made a good

officer, and had a good deal of fight in him.

On first entering the ravine, young Allston had left the rear of the troop, come to the front, and was now in conversation with his captain.

'We must be near the Spring of the Glen,' as designated in Arista's map,' said Clifton, in reply to a question of his comrade. Its approach is said to be through the worst ravine on our route. If there be any worse than this may Heaven protect us and our beasts.'

'I would suggest, captain,' said the youth, that we make a halt, for the train is yet lagging some distance in our rear; and if my presentiments are any indication, we shall meet with resistance before we get out of this wretched apology for a road.'

'It is possible,' answered Clifton; 'but if you look yonder you will perceive that we are near the gorge; surely Nature never formed a pass so well adapted for defence as that; but I yet discover naught to excite my fears.'

Their conversation was here interrupted by one of the troop, who rode hastily up, and addressed the captain in a dialect which Anglo-Saxon ears can never fail of recognising.

'Och! by the powers, captin', beggin yer pardon, the Mexikins will soon be upon us, shure now.'

'What mean you, Rory?' questioned Clifton.

'I mane what I've jest tould ye.'

'You look a little frightened, Rory.'

'Not a bit of it.'

'Well, what's the matter?'

'Matther? oh, be Jabers, matther enough, captin'. I've made a beautiful diskivery!'

'Well, what does it amount to—explain.'

'Och, be Jabers, look at this!' said Rory McShee, producing a silver-mounted pocket pistol of curious make, and presenting it to his commander. 'Now, had it only been a horse-shoe,' continued Rory, 'av course good loock would ha' been with all ov us;



The Light Dragoon seizing a Mexican Charger on the Field of Buena Vista.



THE HORSEMAN'S WRESTLE, A FINEST OF THE ART OF HORSEMANSHIP

but whither loock or misfortin' is in the findin' or a pistol, av course yer 'onor knows better than Rory McShee. Be mighty careful now, captin, how ye handle the pistil—it might go off, for by my sowl it's loaded.'

'Sure enough,' remarked Clifton to his lieutenant, as he drew the charge; the powder and wadding I should judge from appearances have not been over twelve hours in the barrel. It's a handsome weapon, at all events. Ah!' continued he, surprised, as his eye rested upon a silver cross, inlaid in the stock; 'here's engraved the owner's name—ROMANO FALCON, by all that's fortunate! We shall soon have work to do—for this guerilla chieftain can't be far off! Halt the column, lieutenant—we must send out a party of reconnaissance before we venture to pass yon rocky defile.'

A halt was ordered, and a detachment selected to reconnoitre beyond the glen.—2d Lieutenant Short—or Long Zeke—volunteered to lead the party on this somewhat hazardous duty; and twelve men, including Irish Rory, were soon prepared to follow him. This party proceeded on through the ravine, and with due caution entered the rocky gorge, refreshed themselves and horses from the pellucid waters of the spring, and soon entered the wide plain beyond, each cavalier, as they slowly wended their wap, keeping an eye of suspicion upon every rock, tree, or bank that could conceal an enemy within a rifle shot distance. They discovered nothing—all seemed clear and safe for the troop and train to pass, and after continuing on as far as the leader deemed necessary, he ordered them to 'right about,' intending to return and report. But the horses heads were no sooner turned, when a large body of Mexican cavaliers, mounted on fleet horses, came rushing at full speed across the plain, and deliberately halted and formed a line directly in the road, thus completely cutting off the party of reconnoissance from rejoining their main body

Long Zeke was thunderstruck and dismayed at the sudden appearance of this formidable force. This was the first dilemma in which he had ever been caught, where he was at a complete loss how to extricate himself. He scarcely knew whether it were better to order a flight, or make a desperate effort to cut through their ranks; to attempt the latter, after a second look at the overwhelming number he would have to encounter, he knew would be thought by his superiors to be the acme of madness. To run, and have a legion of semi-barbarians at his heels he declared finally he could not. His party, including himself, consisted of just thirteen—the enemy were five times that number, well armed and mounted on California steeds. At length Zeke thought, to cut through them was a feat worth trying for—he would like, if possible, to emulate Captain Thornton's daring act in dashing through a superior force on the Rio Grande; but on a sober second thought he abandoned this plan, for he remembered that the gallant Thornton was called before a Court of Enquiry and reprimanded for his unexampled temerity. Before, however, he could decide what course to pursue, the enemy displayed a flag of truce, and an officer bore it toward the little band of Yankees, who awaited but the word to dash in among their foes.

'Och! thunder and thurf!' exclaimed Rory, upon seeing the peaceful emblem.—'The green devils take us for a small army, shure; I'm thinkin' now they'll trate on any tarms. Och! ye dirty blackguard cut-throat cowards, ye arn't fit now to wait upon the bog-throtters of my own swate Ireland, ye arn't.'

Long Zeke, unattended, rode forward to meet the white flag bearer. They exchanged salutes as they approached, and on halting, the Mexican demanded the unconditional surrender of the party without a minute's delay. The Mexican addressed Zeke in tolerable English, so that the latter had no great difficulty in understanding him.

'In the country where I came from, it generally takes two to make a bargain,' said the Yankee lieutenant. 'If you've got no better offer to make, I'll be putting myself back again.'

'He!' (behold!) said the Mexican cavalier, pointing toward the formidable looking squadron.'

'I see,' replied Zeke, 'there's a tolerable heap on ye; 'but its 'ginst the principles of the universal Yankee nation to surrender unconditionally; couldn't dew it no how.'

'Rash man,' said the Mexican; 'don't you see that thy life and the lives of every one of thy followers is as certain as that Romano Falcon is leader of our band.'

'Wall, mebbe your right, if that cutthroat scoundrel is your captin'. Now where I come from we think he's just about on a par with Captain Kidd, and he was hung for piracy! So you'd better go back and tell your captin' that if he wants to send to 't other world about forty of his company in exchange for us thirteen, you can tell him to come on! Coz 'cording to our calculations one Yankee soldier is equal to three Mexicans any day.'

'Ah, by San Diego! thou dost wrong Romano Falcon!'

'No,' persisted Zeke; 'he's a robber, and his own countrymen make no bones of telling on't.'

'Then they do belie him; and your countrymen may yet find to your sorrow, that the principal officers of the Mexican regular armies are far more treacherous—Santa Anna, Ampudia, Torrejon, and other great Generals that I could name included—than any robber chief who ever infested Mexico.—They are the men who have ruined our country, and not the banditti; and a truer band of men to fight the battles of Mexico does not exist than those commanded by Romano Falcon, whom thou dost look upon with such abhorrence.'

'Then why doesn't he join Mexico's great

armies, instead of prowling about here like so many wild Indians.'

'The regular armies are infinitely more barbarous, in their mode of warfare, than ours.'

'Then Mexico is to be pitied,' replied Zeke, 'and I conclude that the United States will do her a favor, to give her a Government of the real genuine Yankee stamp; and build school-houses, canals, railroads, locomotives and magnetic telegraphs. Them's my sentiments, Mister Mexican.'

'I cannot tarry to listen to thy speeches. What is thy answer to the demand of Romano Falcon.'

'You have it already!'

'And dar'st thou return such a message to Romano Falcon?'

'Could'nt send no other, if Romano Falcon were the devil, and you, Mister What's-ye-name, were Romano Falcon!' answered Zeke with emphasis.'

'Bold man, I admire thy bluntness as well as thy termerity, and would treat with thee, perhaps, on more favorable terms than an unconditional surrender!'

'Can't expect any thing better from your captin'.'

'I have authority to make such terms as I please.'

'Wall, then, let's hear your best offer.—You must be reasonable, or we can't trade, no how.'

'In consideration I have taken quite a liking to thee, thou and thy band shall become our prisoners, and shall be treated as prisoners of war; and whenever an opportunity offers, by exchange or ransom, thou shalt be free: and when we reach our mountain rendezvous a parole liberty shall be granted thee and thy followers.'

'Wall,' said Zeke, hesitating; 'don't know but that's worth considerin' on; 'but that darn'd captin' o' yourn might back out.'

'Romano Falcon's word once given, is never compromised.'

'Wall, I'd like to talk over the matter

with him, any how. 'Sposin' you go and tell the fellar I should like to have a talk with him.'

'Romano Falcon stands before thee!'

'Yeou?'

'Si, Senor.'

'Git aout, now; can't hardly believe that you're the chap we've heard such 'tarnal bad things about! You don't look as if you'd like to roast a Yankee's head and eat it!—You ain't coming any gum-game, are ye?'

'I have told thee the truth.'

'Wall, I guess you have. I'll trust ye, but if I find out that you're deceiving me, I'll be darn'd if I don't write to the President of the United States to come out here, and bring the whole male population after

him, and leave the women to take the reins of government into their own hands. The women can administer justice e'en-jest as well as the men.'

'You need not fear—Romano Falcon will keep his word.'

Here this rather protracted interview was brought to a close. The preliminaries of the surrender having been completed satisfactorily to both parties, our Yankee lieutenant, and his small band became prisoners to the renowned Chieftain, and were marched off toward his mountain retreat!

In regard to the Light Dragoons, whom we left in the ravine, we shall satisfy our readers in the next chapter.



CHAPTER V.

Desperate Conflict of the Light Dragoons with the Rancheros of the Poisoned Lance. Complete Overthrow of the Lancers. Sudden Appearance of a Mexican Maiden on an Errand of Mercy. The Poisoned Wounds. The Antidote. Surprise of Clifton. Allston's First Impressions. The Flight. The Pursuit. The Forest. Perilous Situation of Allston. A Successful Stratagem. Sad Accident.



S MAY well be supposed, after two hours had elapsed, Clifton began to entertain very strong apprehensions in regard to the party of reconnoissance he had despatched in his advance to examine the pass. He, therefore, resolved to push ahead with his company and train and combat every obstacle which might tend to impede his progress.

Having made known his fears to his company, and impressing upon them the necessity of being vigilant and prepared for any attack by ambuscade or otherwise, he gave the order to march. In single file they slowly entered the glen, when, perceiving no signs of an enemy, they once more halted for the purpose of partaking of the cool waters of the Glen Spring, and filling their canteens, they continued on in the same order as before. Emerging from the rocky defile, and forming into platoons, they marched on, but had scarcely reached the spot where the reconnoitering party had been surprised, when the heavy tramp of horses' feet were heard, and facing suddenly about, Clifton saw a large troop of Rancheros galloping down the sides of the declivity which sloped off gradually from the summit of the rocky walls which formed the glen. They

approached almost within gunshot distance when they wheeled into line, halted, and prepared to charge the dragoons. But our hero and his band were not wholly unprepared, for the vigilance which had been ordered was not in the least relaxed. The train was ordered to advance, and a line was quickly formed for its protection; their rifles were unslung, and with surprising promptness each weapon was prepared for a desperate defence. Not a man among them doubted the result, although the Ranchero lancers nearly doubly outnumbered them, and with their long weapons glistening brightly above their heads made a very imposing and formidable appearance. There was no summons to surrender—no flag of truce displayed by the Mexicans; but there was enough in their movements, looks, and loud commands of their chieftain, to indicate that no cries for quarter would be listened to from the invader. With lances poised they waited for the signal to charge! The chieftain gave the word—the bugle's shrill blast proclaimed the onset—and each lancer raising himself in the stirrup, and spurring his steed into a flying gallop, rushed toward the foe, who stood a living fortification before them. Onward they rushed as if intending to win the victory with one dreadful

blow ! So certain was their chieftain of an easy conquest, that he took precaution to order his men not to kill the horses, unless in cases of absolute necessity, for he coveted the noble looking steeds of his enemy.

The dragoons awaited the coming of the lancers with undaunted looks ; not a shot was fired until they were within the distance of thirty yards, when suddenly the cracking of three score well aimed rifles checked for a time their onward career, and many a bold lancer fell from his charger by this galling and unexpected reception !

The Ranchero leader enraged at the faltering of his troop, with loud curses and threats again ordered them to the charge !—Madly they rushed forward pell-mell among the dragoons ere they had opportunity to reload their rifles. But they had not forgotten those little instruments of death—the revolvers—which showered the bullets among the Rancheros with dreadful effect ! Confusion and dismay were in their midst, and after unhorsing and wounding a few among the unterrified dragoons, the lancers made a flying retreat, leaving more than one third of their numbers upon the field, either dead, dying or wounded.

Two only of Clifton's men were killed, though several were dangerously wounded, and he, as well as Lieutenant Allston, had received flesh wounds from the lances of their impetuous assailants. Not regarding themselves, however, they ordered every attention paid to the Mexican as well as the American sufferers, and even assisted personally in alleviating their distresses.

From one of the Rancheros, who was left upon the field, Clifton learned that it was with Canales' band of desperadoes whom he had just had so severe a contest ; and the fact, although at first he could scarcely credit it, that his party of reconnoissance had not fallen into the power of the Lancers. He ordered this prisoner to the rear, resolving that he would endeavor to gain from him some farther information that might prove of importance to the American cause.

The result of this conflict of course was peculiarly gratifying to our hero, inasmuch as he had signally defeated a superior force in point of numbers, and that force was a lawless band of ruffian Rancheros, and one which had been of peculiar annoyance to the Americans from the day that their banner was first unfurled upon the Rio Grande. It was, too, his first battle—his first victory ! and his eye kindled with pride as he thought of the gallant conduct displayed by every one of the dragoons—and he, though a strippling as he regarded himself, was their commander !—he had planned and directed the successful defence and overthrow of their murderous assailants ! It was, indeed, a matter for congratulatory thoughts ; but as he contemplated the scene of carnage before him, and beheld his own sword reeking with the blood of even a revengeful foe, he could not suppress a tear of pity for all who had fallen in the fight ; and he entertained unpleasant doubts as to the glory of shedding human blood, though it were in honorable combat ! And more than this it was a doubt in his mind whether the aggressive war his countrymen were waging was founded upon the principles of justice and in accordance with the true spirit of republicanism. These things he had heard suggested before he left his own land, but he had heeded them not—his patriotic ardor impelled him onward to hazard life and all in the service of his country. But his reflections were soon interrupted. His attention was now arrested by the quick approach of a female, who suddenly emerged from the wood on the opposite side of the plain. She tripped with light and hurried steps over the bloody field, giving no heed to the dead and dying which were strewn along her path. She gazed around among the victors whose eyes were mostly bent upon her, and perceiving one who stood apart from the rest, whose uniform marked him as a leader, she approached and respectfully saluted him.

Clifton returned her salute, but he gazed

upon her with wonder. He saw that she was beautiful, for her eyes sparkled like twin diamonds, yet the lower part of her face was veiled. Her manner surprised him most, for she seemed much agitated, and some moments elapsed as she stood in presence of Clifton, before she could give utterance to a single word, and when she did speak, she exclaimed in almost breathless accents :

‘*Por le amor de Dios, Senor Capitan—*’

‘*Non entendre de lengua, Espanola!*’ said Clifton, bringing into requisition nearly all the Spanish he had mastered.

‘*Habla V. Engles?*’ (Do you speak English?) she enquired.

‘Yes.’

‘I understand it a little,’ she continued, in tolerably good English, though with a strong Spanish accent.

‘Then tell me your errand, quickly.’

‘Si, caballero.’

‘You seem agitated; pray calm your feelings,’ said he, looking upon her with an interested but tender expression.

‘You have had a terrible battle?’ said she, enquiringly.

‘We have.’

‘And from appearances you have been victorious?’

‘Most signally.’

‘You may think it strange that a Mexican maiden can say that she is heartily glad of the result.’

‘Strange, indeed! how shall I account for it?’

‘First let me inquire if many of your soldiers are wounded?’

‘Several; though I think not very severely.’

‘Are they lance wounds?’

‘Without a single exception, I believe, and I thought it somewhat remarkable.’

‘*Dios de Cielo!*’ exclaimed the maiden; ‘Well you might have thought it remarkable. Those with whom you have this day been engaged in mortal combat are the RANCHEROS OF THE POISONED LANCE!’

‘What mean you?’ ejaculated Clifton, amazed at her earnestness as she uttered the potent words by which she meant Canales’ desperadoes should be known to all Mexico.

‘If you follow not my directions, all, of your band, whose flesh has been marred by the lance in this dreadful encounter, even if the wound be no deeper than a needle’s scratch, are dead men before the sun sinks beneath yon high mountain’s peak.’

‘I have a slight wound myself,’ said Clifton, who began now to think the maiden either a spy or a maniac, ‘but it gives me little pain and less inconvenience. And, admitting that we have been wounded by envenomed lances, before I give credence to your story, explain to me the apparent inconsistency which your conduct betrays in offering to befriend when you should seek to destroy the enemies of your country and your people!’

‘For the love of Heaven, ask not for any explanation, now—God alone knows my motive, and he, too, knows that I am not trying to deceive you! Therefore, I beseech you to delay not, for the fatal hour is near!’

These words were spoken with so much warmth and apparent sincerity, that Clifton began to think his suspicions might prove unfounded.

‘The Rancheros war not as Christians!’ continued the strange girl! ‘They would sacrifice you and your troop to their implacable hatred and thirst for plunder! Give my counsel heed or Death will soon mark you for his!’

‘What would you do?’ enquired Clifton, with increasing confidence.

‘I would save your life and the lives of your brave companions?’

‘I mean by what power?’

‘I have a safe and certain antidote to the poisonous liquid with which the Ranchero’s lance is bathed. Here it is!’ and she produced from her bosom an ounce phial, filled with a blood red liquid. Let me but apply

a drop to the wound, and the power of the poison will be speedily checked.'

'Unveil your face, maiden, and if those concealed lineaments comport with those love beaming eyes, and the sweet voice that I have heard, I will believe thee an angel sent by Providence to befriend me.'

'But you may hereafter have it in your power to betray me?'

'Never! though my life depended upon the betrayal!'

'Swear to this!'

'I swear.'

The maiden unveiled her face, and disclosed as sweet and ingenuous a countenance as ever a daughter of Mexico could boast of. It was decidedly handsome, too; her cheeks and lips were of the cherry's hue: and a beautiful sett of teeth, which was revealed every time she spoke, excelled the pearl in whiteness. Her hair, black and glossy, flowed over a neck and shoulders, almost concealing the pure and transparent complexion beneath, which bore but a slight tinge of that dark hue which characterizes the daughters of that sunny land! She was transcendentally beautiful—so thought our gallant hero—so thought the young lieutenant, Allston, who stood but a few feet in the rear of his commander, completely entranced with the wondrous beauty which characterized every feature of the fair Mexican—there was a charm in the very expression of her large eyes that enchained him to the spot.

Our readers are undoubtedly aware, from circumstances already revealed, that this fair creature was none other than Donna Elvira; and as she turned her attention for a moment from the gallant captain, her eyes met the ardent gaze of the no less gallant but youthful lieutenant—it was but for a moment, for she modestly turned them away and again addressed Clifton:

'Senor Capitan,' said she, 'you hesitate; shall I again veil my face?'

'No, fair creature; I—I—'

Allston, stepping one or two paces forward, scarcely knowing what he did or what he was saying; 'I beg pardon—I——' and he blushed confusedly.

'Will you listen to me?' said she, addressing Clifton, 'remember! you do not realize the peril in which you are placed, and what an hour may bring forth.'

'What say you, Allston; shall we confide in this fair Mexican senorita?' asked Clifton, perceiving the embarrassment which her charms had so suddenly caused in him; 'you have heard the nature of her errand. Speak, Henry, you seem bewildered.'

'Believe, captain—oh, believe her!' answered the lieutenant, warmly—the Prince of Evil, himself, could not create a being of such angelic beauty, of such apparent innocence, to betray or destroy. No, captain, believe her the angel of our salvation, sent by Providence to save us from the fearful death she has warned us of.'

'Thank you, kind Senor, for your intercession and confidence,' said Elvira, again venturing to meet the youthful officer's gaze; 'but I must ask you to be less lavish of such extravagant flattery.'

Henry again blushed and bowed his head, but he made no reply.

'My suspicions have vanished—you shall have my confidence,' said Clifton.

'Where is your wound?' asked Elvira.

'Tis on my breast.'

'Examine it, and before this antidote be applied, you shall have further proof of my sincerity. If the flesh around the wound, by this time, has not become of a greenish hue, then your wound was not made by a poisoned lance.'

'It is but a scratch at most,' said Clifton, as he bared his breast.

But terror seized him the instant his eye rested upon the scratch, as he termed it—his face, which a moment previously was flushed was now deadly pale—his lips quivered, and his very nerves seemed unstrung! The appearance of the wound was, indeed,

singularly alarming. The poison which had begun its dread work had gradually shown its effects by spreading from the wound, and a circle of several inches was already dyed with green; the shade growing lighter as it spread from the centre.

Allston, who had received a slight cut upon the arm, threw off his coat and rolled up his sleeve, meanwhile, and he was quite as much affrighted as his captain, though he had more implicit faith in the promise of the sweet creature, before whom he could have fallen down and worshipped.

'Fear not!' said the gentle physician, in accents sweetly encouraging; 'there is yet no danger. Here is that which will eradicate every trace of the poison in an incredible short space of time.'

She took a soft sponge from beneath her mantilla, and moistening it with the red liquid in the phial, and applied it with her own hand to the poisoned wound.

Then turning to young Allston, she performed the same kind office for him. Then giving the phial and sponge to Clifton bade him, as he valued the lives of the men, to see that the antidote was immediately applied to all who had lance wounds.

Clifton hastened to the wounded men, all of whom were expressing much alarm at the strange aspect which the lance incisions presented. With his own hands he bathed the wounds with the precious liquid; all willingly submitting, when he told them that it already was having the promised effect on his own person.

The antidote, in truth, operated like a charm, and in a very short time restored the flesh, in all the cases, to the natural hue of ordinary incisions.

Meanwhile Clifton was doing the duties of a doctor among his wounded men, the young lieutenant was striving with all the persuasiveness in his power to detain the angelic *Senorita*, with whose dazzling loveliness he was charmed, entranced, bewildered! She declined listening to his fervent

protestations; and it was with difficulty that he made her sensible of his appreciation of the almost miraculous work she had performed. He offered a purse of gold as a reward for what she had done for him, but it was promptly declined. He finally took from his neck a gold chain, to which was appended a striking miniature of a beloved sister, and which also bore considerable resemblance to himself, and placed it around the fair neck of *Elvira*. She looked at the miniature and then gazed into his face. Without asking any questions she smiled and put the miniature into her bosom, regarding it as a token of his unbounded gratitude. She was on the point of bidding him adieu, but he again detained her, and requested permission to be her escort to her home; but she positively declined. Neither could his most eloquent entreaties prevail upon her to reveal her name, or whither she had come, or whither she was going; for reasons, which the reader, in all probability, has already divined, yet a perfect mystery to Henry Allston.

She looked into the youth's face once more—once more smiled sweetly upon him—and uttering a last farewell, she bounded away from him, and sped across the plain with the speed of a frightened deer!

Allston gazed upon her flight for a few moments, uncertain how to act. At length, muttering to himself,

'Fool am I thus to let her flee from me—perhaps forever—without endeavoring to gain some clue at least of her abode—it cannot be afar off!' and off he started in pursuit, but she gained the wood many rods in advance, yet he continued the pursuit.

Clifton re-appeared where he had left them just as he espied his brother officer enter the wood, running at the top of his speed. Mistrusting his errand rightly, his quick disappearance gave him no uneasiness, for he thought his usual prudence would prevent him from trusting himself alone a great way from his company.

Upon the field of that brief and bloody engagement, the victorious dragoons pitched their tents, and bivouacked for the night. Not a soldier of that corps closed his eyes without a heartfelt prayer for the welfare of the beautiful yet mysterious creature who had defeated the hellish intent of the Rancheros of the Poisoned Lance!

But where is Allston? Why does he not return? were questions which Clifton repeatedly put to himself? The camp fires were lighted—the sentry posted—and yet he came not.

But let us follow yet farther the pursued and her pursuer. Allston had struck the little path which Elvira had taken, and followed it with all the speed in his power.—At intervals he caught a glimpse of her flying wardrobe, but at each succeeding time the space between them had widened; yet he continued on without knowing whither he was going, or when he was to stop. He had followed her well nigh half a league, when he lost sight of her altogether; besides, he was uncertain about the path, for there were many running in various directions in that part of the wood he was now in. Being well nigh out of breath, he slackened his speed, and would have turned to retrace his steps, had he not perceived indications of an opening ahead. Continuing on half a mile further, he came to the plain, in which was situated the *ranch* of Senor Espindola, with which the reader is slightly acquainted; but to his amazement he discovered groups of soldiers and horses standing promiscuously together about the premises, and from their appearance he was almost convinced they were a portion of the Ranchero force his own company had so recently signally defeated—but he could perceive no glimpse of the fair object of his pursuit, although it appeared more than probable to his mind that the *ranch* he had discovered was her abiding place.

Not wholly disappointed with the results

of his adventure, thus far, though he fain would have spoken again to the beautiful stranger, he turned to find his way back to his comrades. He walked along with a moderate step, with his thought wholly concentrated upon one image of loveliness, not even giving his mind for a moment upon the strange wood he was pursuing, until, instead of having reached the plain where his comrade's tents were pitched, he again found himself in sight of the same *ranch* he had half an hour before discovered, though he was now in the rear of the main building instead of in front as before.

This fact rather startled him, and brought him to his senses, for the dusky shades of twilight had already somewhat obscured the labyrinthine paths he had been unconsciously pursuing. He now followed, within the edge of the wood, a path which led him to the very spot, whence he had started previously. From this point he shaped his course according to the best of his judgment, determining now to dismiss his inamorata from his mind, and regain the camp before it should become completely dark, for the idea of being benighted alone in a strange wood was decidedly disagreeable, as may be supposed, to a youth like him.

The golden light which yet faintly tinged the sky of the occident was his only beacon to guide him in the course he had marked out; but that soon failed him, and he saw naught but the tall trees of that forest as he passed them, and the twinkling light of a few stars in the very zenith of the heavens.

Soon he heard the tramping of horses' feet—and now the glimmer of a light upon his right hand—turning he saw another directly in front—another on his left—and yet another and another appeared until the forest was illumined by their light. Nearer and nearer in every direction the torches approached him as if the bearers were striving to hem him in. At first he thought that a party might have been sent from his own corps in search of him; but in a moment he

found to his amazement that it was a scouting party of Rancheros, and in all probability he was the object of their singular movements! There was no chance for flight or concealment—to attempt to defend himself seemed equally preposterous. But a moment's reflection told him that should he fall into their hands without one effort, death would be more certain than if he made a desperate defence. He had barely time to seize his revolver, when a savage looking Ranchero discovered him, who immediately galloped toward him with loud cries of—

'Surrender! surrender!'

The peremptory summons was answered by a flash and a crack from the revolver, and the Mexican fell lifeless from the saddle.

Allston seized the horse's bridle—snatched the cap from the head of the defeated Mexican and placed it upon his own head—and vaulted into the saddle. It was but the wonderful act of a moment—yet there was time for some eight or ten Rancheros to fly to the spot, and the brave youth found himself in their very midst! They heard a pistol report, and the death groan which succeeded, and they supposed that their enemy had fallen by the hand of one of their own comrades. This supposition so completely deceived them that, while crowding around together to take a look at the fallen one, Allston suddenly turned the horse's head and rode away with all the speed that was possible, considering the darkness and density of the forest!

But a loud yell, as if the fiends of pandemonium were let loose, now fell upon his ear! The Rancheros had recognized the body of their comrade, and discovered the trick which had been played as soon as they found that the dead man's cap was missing, and saw their enemy's cap lying in its place! Nothing could have enraged them more—with terrific yells and curses and cries for

vengeance, they started off once more in pursuit of their enemy, who was but little more than pistol shot in advance. They gradually gained upon him—he turned to look back upon his pursuers, and the moment a good opportunity offered he again discharged his revolver, and another Ranchero fell from the saddle!

But this event nearly cost Allston his life. The moment he fired, the horse on which he rode started ahead with affright, and ere he could rein him into the narrow opening, he made a leap into the thickest of the wood—a projecting branch struck the youth, and swept him from the horse—he fell senseless among some shrubbery that grew in small patches in various parts of the forest, and was unnoticed by the pursuers as they rode by, for in their confusion at the loss of another comrade they saw not the accident which had occurred to him. The horse being now free of a rider bounded onward with renewed speed—but the pursuers kept on the chase, thinking of course that he still bore away their enemy! Henry Allston had thus far by stratagem and a timely accident eluded the vigilance of his revengeful pursuers!

Mortified, maddened, enraged, the Rancheros, minus two, returned to their quarter without their intended victim. Allston was discovered by them, the second time he found himself, unintentionally, near the ranch of Senor Espindola; and, supposing him a spy a number of the lancers volunteered to go in pursuit, vowing that if he was caught, an execution of torture should be his fate!

* * * * *

The camp of the Light Dragoons were alarmed that night by the sudden coming of a steed within their outposts! But their alarm abated when they saw it was but the steed of a Mexican, and though saddled and bridled it bore no rider!

CHAPTER VI.

The Rendezvous of the Rancheros. Capture of an American Train. An Officer of Rank, with his Daughter, in the Power of the Lancers. Canales' Account of his Defeat by the Light Dragoons. The Mysterious Weapons. 'Volver Pistolete.' Accidental Death of a Ranchero. Canales' Unconcern.



ON THE day succeeding the remarkable events narrated in the previous chapter, all was bustle and confusion at the ranch of Senor Espindola.—There was another cause for this than is yet known to the reader; another event had occurred, truly gratifying to Canales and his band, which we must not omit to mention. A detachment of some fifteen or twenty Rancheros, under the command of Jose Villarno, an inferior officer, had surprised and captured a small American train, and besides the *arrieros*, some six or eight Americans, among whom was a Colonel of dragoons, and his daughter, a young lady of scarcely sixteen years of age. They were forthwith conveyed to Espindola's ranch, which served not only as a rendezvous for the Rancheros, but for a stipulated sum the buildings were allowed to be used as a barracks, and two strongly constructed rooms in a part of one of them were converted into a prison, in which their recent captives were now confined.

Canales, on hearing of the good success of Villarno's detachment, determined on avenging himself for what he had suffered in his conflict with the Light Dragoons.—His first determination was to lead out the

prisoners and shoot them without a moment's warning, reserving the young female captive for a worse fate! but he was restrained from this unmerciful and barbarous course by the interference of Julianio, as well as by every one of his subordinate officers. This interference, however, was only prompted by motives of selfishness. Upon being made acquainted with the character and grade of the prisoners, he finally was influenced to believe that his best and most profitable course was to spare their lives for the present; and, perhaps, a ransom might be had by a reasonable delay.

'It is well,' remarked he to Julianio, after he had reluctantly consented to the suggestions of his comrades; 'but by all the powers of hell they shall not slip through my fingers without a heavy ransom or their life's blood! And as for that fair northern damsel, whose beauty Villarno has described to me, a hundred doubloons shall not purchase her freedom! By the blood of my ancestors, she must be a comely lass if half Villarno says of her be true.'

'Si, Senor Capitan,' answered Julianio; 'I think, however, she cannot be so beautiful as the lovely Donna Elvira. Villarno said they bore a slight resemblance to each other.'

'Ah, Juliano, thou thinkest of little else besides Donna Elvira. Thou art as deeply in love as a poor devil well could be. Come, give thy thoughts to something greater, nobler, and leave off this child's play. Recollect we have great deeds to perform in defence of our country; or more rationally viewing the matter, in bettering the condition of our finances. Truly, notwithstanding the two sad defeats we have sustained, this war is a perfect God-send to us—we may yet suffer more—but better suffer in a war with the northern barbarians, who have plenty of gold, than to be constantly engaged in broils at home, without money to pay even our ragmuffin soldiery.'

'Too true,' replied Juliano; 'but a few engagements like that of yesterday would complete our ruin. Would that I had been there, instead of obeying your orders to remain here.'

'Come, come—no more of that,' said Canales. 'I would have staked my life on an easy victory when we first encountered the enemy.'

'How was it then that the tables were so signally turned?'

'It was so sudden and unexpected that I lost my usual self-possession when in battle,' replied Canales. 'We charged upon them with an impetuosity that I thought could not fail to overwhelm them; but ere we reached their line they sent into our ranks such a shower of bullets that our men seemed to fall by scores. It appears almost incredible when I think of the havoc they made by their first fire. The enemy I judged numbered not over eighty all told, and the leaden hail came as thickly into our midst as if an entire regiment of infantry had poured a volley upon us! The galling effect of such a fire at so short a distance you can well imagine. We were thrown into dreadful disorder and confusion for a moment or two; but having drawn their fire, I succeeded in rallying our men—and onward we pressed with irresistible fury! With our long and

heavy lances we broke into their very midst; but here our men fell faster than ever, from the fire of small and curiously shaped weapons which they displayed as soon as we were upon them! But what most added to my astonishment was the remarkable fact that they could discharge one of these little but terrible fire-arms several times without reloading; and before we could fly from their most murderous effects more than one-third of our men either fell upon the field or were borne away wounded! If all the soldiers of their armies possess such destructive weapons as those we had to contend with, all the legions of Mexico and of the infernal regions combined will never be able to cope with or check the advance of these invading northern savages. I would give a small fortune to gain possession of one of these wonderful weapons.'

'Glad to have it in my power to serve you, Senor Capitan,' said Juliano, taking a pair of revolvers from his pocket. 'Thou shalt possess one without the fortune. I'll show my generosity by presenting thee with one of these deadly instruments which the barbarians style *Volver Pistolete*;' and the lieutenant placed one of the weapons in the hand of his astonished chief.'

'*Es una admiracion!*' exclaimed Canales, examining the ingeniously constructed weapon with scrutiny. 'How possessed thyself of these, Juliano?'

'I found them upon the person of one of the prisoners since they were brought hither, Villarno not having discovered them in his search.'

'They may have more of them concealed about their persons?' suggested Canales.

'We searched them all and discovered no more.'

'By San Pedro, it hath six barrels! No wonder the Yankee *naranjos* won the day! I'd rather have a hundred horsemen, armed with such weapons as these than a whole regiment of infantry with escopetas. But how is it that these little man-killers are man-

aged? 'I do not quite understand them yet.'

'Neither do I,' answered the lieutenant; 'but I advise thee to be cautious, for each barrel is charged.'

Without giving heed to this precaution, Canales continued to pry into the mysteries of the revolver, and just as he had discovered that by means of the trigger the barrels revolved, one of them went off, and a loud groan was heard.

'You have shot some one, captain!' exclaimed Julianio; and he ran towards the group whence the groan proceeded.

'It is only one of our new recruits,' said the lieutenant, immediately returning—'that Don Diego Marin, as he styles himself.'

'*Pobre diablo!*' (poor devil) said Canales, quite unconcerned. 'It is the best thing I could have done for him, and he will be no great of a loss to us. But I have found out the secret, Julianio;' and he discharged the five remaining balls at a tree about three rods distant, with considerable precision.

'Good shots, Senor Capitan,' remarked the lieutenant, after examining the tree which he used as a target.'

'Si; and every one of them would have brought a man to the ground! By all the Saints, I'm quite in love with this wonderful weapon!'

'Well, capitan,' said Julianio, changing the subject, 'what disposition hast thou decided to make of the prisoners for the coming night?'

'See that they be well secured in the strong rooms—let the guard be doubled—and have it composed of our most trusty followers.'

'But where shall the maiden be confined?—she is now with her father.'

'Separate them by all means—they shall feel that I have no mercy for any of the invaders' race, male or female, young or old.'

'Where shall she be placed?'

'Convey her to the ——' Canales hesitated for a moment, thoughtfully; 'no, not there—she shall be more conveniently be-

towed. 'Ah! I have it; let her be conveyed to the small chamber which leads from mine. I will, myself, honor this fairy creature by being her watchful sentinel for one night at least. I'll be responsible, good lieutenant, that she shall be found there in the morning!'

Don Julianio perfectly comprehended his chieftain's motive; for there was more to be learned from the peculiar manner in which he gave his directions, and in the expression of his face, than in the language he had uttered.

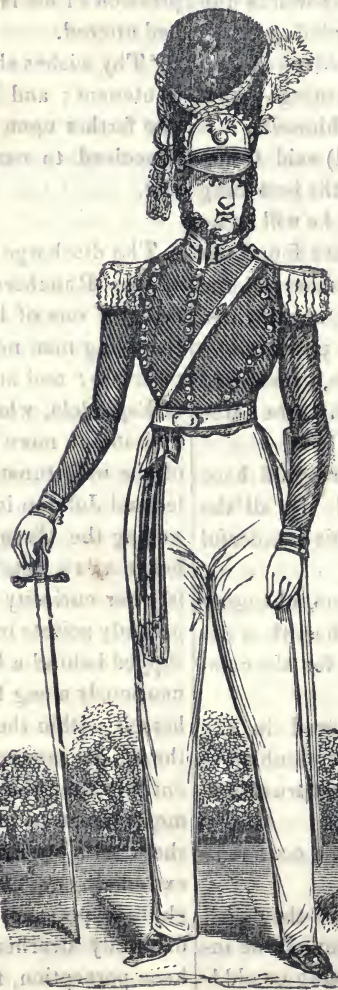
'Thy wishes shall be obeyed,' replied the lieutenant; and he left his master to meditate farther upon the plan he had so readily conceived to carry into effect his base intent.

The discharge of the revolver in the hands of the Ranchero Chief, and consequent death of one of his band, had called around the dying man nearly all the persons on the premises; and among the crowd the Senorita Espindola, who perhaps deplored the inhuman act more than any of the comrades of the unfortunate man. Perceiving Canales and Julianio in conversation, she tarried among the throng until the body had been borne away, determining, if possible, to satisfy her curiosity as to the import of this apparently private interview. Accordingly she slipped behind a hedge near by, and tripping cautiously along for a few yards, she found herself within the sound of their voices, and the hedge intervening, screened her person entirely from the two officers, whose movements, from an intuitive sense of duty which she could hardly have explained, she was extremely anxious to understand. The concluding portion of their conversation she distinctly overheard, and with a woman's keen perception, fully realized the peril in which the young female prisoner was soon to be placed.

Elvira remained in her hiding place until after Julianio had left his master, when she

crept away stealthily and gained the principal mansion unperceived. To devise some expedient to thwart the villain's design her whole thoughts were engaged. Her first plan was to seek out Don Juliano, and endeavor by entreaties to influence him not to obey the orders of his chief, but this on farther reflection she saw would be fruitless—for she knew him to be an artful, hypocritical villain; and she had more than once offended him by repulsing his advances; she

knew also that he stood greatly in the fear of Canales; and, further than this, she saw that if she broached the subject to him and he should decline, the grand object would be entirely defeated, for extra precaution would be taken to prevent any interference with the vile scheme. She finally resolved to keep the discovery she had made to herself, determining, however, to leave nothing unturned whereby she might prevent the brutal outrage in contemplation.





Miraculous Escape.



Charge at Buena Vista.



Resaca de la Palma.



Storming of Montercy.



CHAPTER VII.

Ingenious and daring Plot of Senorita Espindola to set free the American Prisoners. Her first Visit to Colonel Granville and Rosalia. An Interesting Interview. A Remarkable Discovery. Singular Impressions of the Parties. Elvira makes known the Intention of Canales. The Promise. A strange Present to make to a Lady.



THE sun had not yet set, although its rays no longer beamed upon the domain of Senor Espindola, but the intervening mountain peaks were tipped with golden light, and the sky above and beyond the Sierra Madre was gorgeously bright. Even at this early and pleasant hour, the Rancheros, with the exception of the guard, had sought their quarters for the night, for their recent arduous duties and a general carousal in which they had indulged during the day, had well nigh exhausted their energies.

Donna Elvira, who deserves thus far to be called our heroine, rejoiced at this peaceful state of things, for her ready mind had already concocted a plot which she trusted would defeat the infamous intent of Canales. Being on apparent good terms with both officers and soldiers, she was free to go whither she pleased without being suspected of treachery, or questioned as to her object, or even challenged by the sentinels.

The apartment in which the Colonel and daughter were confined was in the furthestmost of two or three low, flat-roofed stone buildings, standing near together in the rear of the main one; yet a high wall on either side so connected them that neither one

could be entered unless from out the principal dwelling, and through one of the *suite* of rooms occupied by Canales. At stated distances within the walls sentinels were posted, one of whom paced to and fro directly in front of the door where the father and child were imprisoned. The remainder of the captives were confined in the guard-house some thirty rods in front of the main building, where also sentinels were stationed.

Elvira, as yet, had not seen the female prisoner, but hearing her loveliness much extolled, she resolved to gain her friendship if she failed in her laudable intentions.— With this view she culled a bouquet of fragrant and beautiful flowers, and selecting a choice lot of delicious fruit which she tied up in her *panuelo*, she hurried on to make her first visit to the fair prisoner. Fortunately, Canales was enjoying a quiet siesta at the time, and she passed through his apartment without disturbing him. The sentinel at the threshold challenged her not, and when she appeared before the prison door, she demanded of the guard admittance in the name of the Senor Espindola. He hesitated not, but unlocking the ponderous door and throwing it back upon its hinges, Elvira entered and passed on to an inner door which she opened without assistance,

and she stood within the dungeon walls which encompassed Colonel Granville, and his accomplished daughter, Rosalia!

This prison-house presented few conveniences; a rude table, but one chair, and a pile of straw, covering one half of the stone floor, were all the things of comfort that it could boast of. Without these, comfortless and wretched indeed would it have been.—The Colonel, almost in a state of despondency at the dread fate which his captors had threatened him, was seated in the rude chair with one arm resting upon the table, while the other encompassed the neck of his beautiful child, who with sweet consoling looks and encouraging words was striving to cheer the sad heart of her parent.

As Donna Elvira approached they both started up, and with surprise gazed upon the lovely creature who had so suddenly appeared in their presence. Rosalia advanced to receive her greeting, for she saw that the pleasant expression which radiated from her brilliant countenance, betokened that she came not for evil, but on an errand of love—to sympathize with them in their misfortune. If Rosalia was surprised and pleased at this visit from one of her own sex—one so remarkably beautiful as Elvira—how much more so was Colonel Granville, to behold for once in his life a beauty among the Mexicans, although in former years he had held considerable intercourse with them, while stationed with the United States' troops at San Augustin, and also occasional visits from them while at Pensacola. There was something, however, in her looks, that struck him more agreeably than the singular perfection of her features—whether it was that she resembled any one that he had ever seen before, or that of his being visited by her in such a place, or what it was, it would have been impossible for him to have explained. As he gazed almost abstractedly upon her, he saw an irresistible charm in the very expression of her eye, which made him feel as if he could have clasped her to his heart;

not from any sensual impulse, but from an impulse purer, holier; a mystery which may be divulged hereafter.

'*Buenos noches, Senorita!*' was Elvira's first salutation, and she took the hand of Rosalia and pressed it warmly within her own. 'See, I have brought you this little bunch of flowers, and a little parcel of fruit.'

'Thank you, thank you,' answered the grateful girl. 'These flowers are beautiful truly, and fragrant, and very rare to me.—This fruit, too, father, looks delicious; but to whom are we indebted for this unexpected favor?'

'Elvira Espindola is my name.'

'May Heaven please to place it in our power to reciprocate these tokens of your kindness,' said Rosalia.

'Amen!' was the response of Colonel Granville, and he came forward and took the maiden's hand, and gazed upon her with a look of exceeding interest. 'God will bless such as thee, sweet maiden!'

There was something winning to Elvira even in the tones of the Colonel's voice, which struck a chord deep in the heart of the fair Mexican, and she allowed her hand to remain clasped within his while he spoke. His manners were kind and gentle towards her; he addressed her as he would if she had been his own child, and had returned to him after a long absence. So different was he, she thought, from her own father, the Senor Espindola, that she wished in the purity of her heart that Heaven had given her such a parent. So strong was this feeling within her, that, before she had left the cell, she began to envy Rosalia, gloomy as her situation then appeared.

She remained in conversation with them nearly an hour, and so great was the interest which she made manifest in behalf of the prisoners, that she was not aware how swiftly those precious moments flew by, and had caused her almost to forget the most important part of her errand.

'I have something to tell you, ere I go,

which grieves me much,' at length said Elvira, as the tears started into her eyes.

'Pray, what can it be?' ejaculated Colonel Granville, noticing her deep concern.

'Your chief captor has given orders for your separation; and this very night it is to be accomplished.'

'Separated?' repeated the parent. 'Take the father from the child?'

'The order is that you be separated,' replied Elvira.

'Oh, no, no!' shrieked Rosalia, frantically, as she threw her arms about her father's neck. 'They shall not separate us—they cannot—they are not so cruel as to deal with us thus inhumanly.'

'Would to Heaven that it might be averted,' said Elvira; 'but that now seems impossible. If you will be advised by a simple maiden, submit without a murmur, and ere another day has passed you will, perchance, not only be re-united, but free from the power of the unscrupulous Ranchero Chieftain.'

'Oh, no, dear father,' said Rosalia, more calmly; 'we must not be separated—even for an hour—any fate were better far than this.'

'I fear, my child, it will be useless to remonstrate,' replied the Colonel; 'you forget that we are not prisoners to a chief who regards the usages which govern civilized nations in times of war. You have become the desponding one now, my child—cheer up—let the counsel of this gentle maiden govern our actions in this matter—methinks I read hope in her very looks.'

'Perhaps—oh no—I cannot suspect for a moment one whose countenance so strongly bears the impress of truthfulness,' said Rosalia in low tones. 'If such a being as she can deceive and betray, and wear at the same time such an expression of innocence, then moral goodness is lost to the world.—Yes, dear father, let us be guided by her.'

'I marvel not that you should suspect me,' remarked Elvira; for I know the treacherous reputation my countrymen bear among

you; but believe me, ye are not the first Americans who have been befriended by Elvira Espindola. It was scarce two days since when she saved the lives of two as gallant cavaliers as ever drew swords. They were from your own land, and one of them in token of his gratitude, I allowed to place this chain around my neck; and by gazing upon this little picture attached thereto, it will strengthen your confidence in my sincerity. The fairest of Mexico's daughters possess not such a beautiful complexion as does this semblance of a fair American.'

Rosalia held the miniature in her hand for a few moments, when she exclaimed with deep concern,

'Good Heavens! it bears the likeness of my dear friend, Alice Allston, Lieut. Henry Allston's sister! Look, father! see you not the remarkable resemblance?'

Colonel Granville, at the first glance upon the miniature, was equally startled at the mysterious discovery.

'Said you that you saved his life?' asked he.

'I did.'

'And another officer?'

'True.'

'Of what rank?'

'That of captain, so far as I can judge.'

'And how?'

'From the envenomed lances of the Rancheros.'

'Can this be possible?' queried the Colonel to himself.

'It is possible,' said Elvira, hearing his words, and perceiving a shadow of doubt and wonder in the expression of his countenance. 'I will explain. They were both wounded by the poisoned lances—'

'Wounded, did you say? and by poisoned lances?' ejaculated Rosalia, interrupting her speech; and the color forsook her cheeks, and her lips quivered as she turned away to hide the sudden emotion which this announcement had caused.

Elvira continued.

‘— And before the venom could perform its deadly work I applied an antidote to their wounds.’

‘Are they are now quite well?’ questioned Rosalia, somewhat relieved from her startling fears.

‘So I left them.’

‘Where did the conflict take place?’ asked Granville.

‘On the plain beyond the ravine—but a short distance from this place.’

‘And where are these officers now?’

‘Probably with the main body of the American army, which, it is reported, are even now before the city of Monterey.’

The promptness with which these enquiries were answered, left no room for doubt in the mind of Colonel Granville. He felt and believed all was true.

The earnest ejaculation and deep concern of Rosalia at the strange intelligence, did not escape the keen observation of her parent. He read in her looks a matter which deeply interested him—something which he had hoped for, but had not anticipated that it was yet even in its budding.’

‘Thanks, gentle maiden,’ said Granville, after a brief pause, ‘for this important information, and for the invaluable services our countrymen have received at your hands, so great an interest.

and for your manifestations of kindness towards us. A nation’s gratitude is your due; and may Heaven grant an old soldier permission to give proofs of his gratitude. We now place the most implicit confidence in you, and whatever you suggest our duty will be to act in compliance.’

‘My prayer is now that I may have it in my power to show that this confidence is not misplaced,’ answered Elvira. ‘Again, I repeat submit to the cruel separation in contemplation without a murmur; and in case of any failure of my endeavors in your behalf, when you have been made to part from your parent,’ she continued to Rosalia, ‘you may find a friend in this!’ and she took from her bosom a small silver hilted stiletto, and placed it in the hand of the fair captive, and resumed—‘An instrument I know, unbecoming a woman to carry, and one which she would unwillingly use, but I can conceive of situations and circumstances, when the Righteous Judge of the world would nerve her heart and strengthen her arm to wield it with a deadly power!’

Uttering these words, Elvira bid them adieu for a short time, and left the prison, not, however, without bestowing a lingering look of sweetness and compassion upon those for whom she had conceived so sudden and so great an interest.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Ranchero Chieftain and his Lieutenant. Reflections of the former. His Infamous Purpose. His Visit to the fair Prisoner. The Counterplot. New mode of 'Mesmerizing' Sentinels. Success of Elvira. Preparations for Escape. The Release. Death of one of the Guard. Canales' vile Purpose Defeated. 'To Horse! To Horse!' The Flight. The Pursuit. Rage of the Ranchero Chieftain. Novel Explanations.



WO hours before midnight the inhuman mandate of Canales was executed—Rosalia having been taken from her father's arms and conveyed to the room

designated for her reception, by Juliano, who, having locked the door, gave the key to his chief, who thus questioned him.

'How bore this fair damsel the separation?'

'Without a murmur; or even expressing in words a desire to remain with him,' was the lieutenant's reply.

'Indeed! Did the old man, her father, make no remonstrances?'

'He uttered not a syllable.'

'Strange,' muttered Canales. 'By my faith, I think now I shall not make them duly feel the weight of my vengeance!'

'When I told the father of the duty I had to perform,' resumed Juliano, 'he replied not, but exchanging a kiss with his pretty daughter, and bidding each other a good night, she was prepared to follow me.'

'Thanks, good lieutenant; leave me now, and see that all the sentinels are at their posts. There is a need of a watchful guard to night. Should the barbarians learn that I have a colonel of dragoons in my power,

and where our quarters are, we may have the furious hell-hounds down upon us before morning.'

Juliano promised to see that all was safe, and saluting his chief, and wishing him a joyous night, he retired.

Canales, considering all things safe, he took from his belt a pair of *pistoles* and a savage looking *macheta*, and laid them upon a table, in the centre of the apartment, then taking off his military *chaqueta*, he threw himself on a couch, where he was soon absorbed in deep thought upon the recent disastrous events which had so materially decimated his force. His hatred to the 'barbarians, as he uniformly termed them, knew no bounds, and it was doubly increased by the recent mortifying defeats he had sustained, where he had so confidently anticipated easy victories. He recollected the boasts he had more than once made to some of the leading Mexican officers, who winked at and even encouraged his independent mode of warfare, that he could with his efficient and well-organised power engage a treble force of the enemy with most certain success. They were credulous, too, of his vain blustering, for in truth such a powerful looking squadron of cavalry they had nev-

er seen before, composed of their own people. They had been well drilled, were well armed, and had all the courage a band of desperate adventurers could be supposed to have. But the tables had been completely turned—he had suffered all that he had intended his enemy should suffer; and that which stung him most sensibly, next to his extreme mortification, was the fact of his made considerable pecuniary loss.

Revenge!—implacable, deadly revenge! was now the controlling passion of his heart! and his diabolical intent, which was incited by hate more than by any other passion, he was now free to put into execution.

The innocent and beautiful creature in his power was to be the first victim of his burning vengeance! His cruel act with laughs of exultation should be boasted of even unto the ears of her parent! The aged officer should die a death of torture by his own hand, after his first hellish purposes had been consummated!

Uttering a laugh of fiendish exultation the monster arose from his couch, and strode towards the door of the apartment which confined his fair prisoner. He placed his ear at the key-hole—all was silent as death! Inserting the key noiselessly into the lock, and slowly turning the key, he opened the door, stepped within, and locked it upon the inside!

Beware, base man! Approach not that couch, whereon reclineth a being of innocence and of purity! Better were it for thee to violate God's canon against self-slaughter by slaying thyself, than to violate a still higher decree of the Eternal Being! Pause, monster! The worse tortures of the damned spirits of hell, can never avenge so foul a crime as thy wicked heart hath conceived, and purposeth to accomplish!

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For a time we draw the curtain upon this scene, to look after others who are enacting conspicuous parts in this night's business.

The moment that Julianio had retired to

his quarters, the Senorita Espindo was upon the alert. She had heard his injunction of vigilance to the sentinels, and she followed him in his rounds, soon afterwards, and repeated to the guard almost the words of caution the lieutenant had used, and promised them that, in consideration of the strictness of their duty, she was permitted to fill each of their canteens with *pulque* (the universal intoxicating beverage of the Mexicans). There was one sentinel, however, she could not reach, and he was posted before the door of the prison of Colonel Granville, and she did not dare to pass through the Chief's room, thinking he might question her, and there was no other way of communicating with him.

Suspecting naught of her bold intent, but on the contrary the sentinels were all exceedingly delighted at the prospect of having some of their much loved *pulque* to stimulate them while walking their lonely rounds. Soon she re-appeared to each one of the sentry, and poured a generous quantity of the Mexican ardent into their canteens; and her eyes glistened with a peculiar satisfaction, as she beheld each and all of them swallow with avidity the intoxicating draught.

Half an hour elapsed, and she again visited each sentinel's post—but not one was stirring!—all were lying prostrate upon the earth!—and in a sleep so profound, that the thundering of heavy artillery in their ears would scarcely have disturbed them!—for they had not only partaken freely of the *pulque*, but a more potent potion with it, of a greater somnific tendency! Their *escopetas* were lying by their sides—the heroic maiden gathered them up, and conveyed them to the prison in which the Americans, who were captured with Colonel Granville, were confined. From the belt of the unconscious sentinel who guarded the door of the prison she took the key, and entering among the captives soon aroused them, and placed an *escopeta* in each of their hands.

The Americans, it may well be supposed,

were as much astonished as delighted, to see in their deliverer a beautiful female, and that female a Mexican. She told them of the danger in which the fair maiden captive stood, and explained as well as she could the motives that impelled her to set them free. She also told them of the manner in which she had rendered the sentinels harmless for the present at least. She then bade them follow her with a cautious step, and she guided them towards a long low shed where the Rancheros horses were ready saddled and bridled in case of a night attack upon their quarters. The fleetest steeds were pointed out by Elvira; and she directed them to be led to a small clump of trees which stood about half way between the guard-house and the entrance to the forest. To the branches of the trees she ordered the horses to be tied, and then led the prisoners back to the guard-house. Here she bade them await until a preconcerted signal for them to appear should be given, and imparting other minor directions, which they promised implicitly to follow, she left them and proceeded as quickly as possible towards the quarters of Canales. Listening at the door of his apartment she heard his footsteps pacing to and fro; presently all was still, and she pushed the door ajar just at the moment that he passed into the adjoining room. She tarried not for a moment but tripped lightly and cautiously across the floor, and by the range of small buildings until she encountered the only sentinel on the ranch whom she had not regaled with the drugged pulque. As soon as he saw her, he gave the challenge—

'*Quien vive!*'

'*Amigo!*' replied the Señorita, putting a bold face upon the matter; 'I have a message to convey from the young maiden captive to her father.'

'You cannot pass at this hour.'

'Why this unusual precaution?'

'Because my orders were more impera-

tive and stricter than usual—the lieutenant said, let *no one* pass!

'Who dares prevent my passing when and where I please upon my father's premises?' demanded the Señorita with increased assurance? 'Shall I call your Chief? Have I not just passed his quarters? You forget that by this permission he sanctions my coming hither? But you shall learn my privilege;' and she turned as if to go to Canales' quarters.

'*Bastamente! pasar!*' cried the sentinel, knowing his chieftain's antipathy to being disturbed.

At this acquiescence Elvira again turned, and the duped soldier unlocked the prison door, and she entered once more into the presence of Colonel Granville. In whispering tones she hurriedly related to him all that had been done, and giving him a pistolette, which she had concealed beneath her *trena*, (scarf)—told him of the sentinel before the door, as the only probable obstacle he would have to encounter before he could rejoin his companions. She bade him follow her until near the threshold; where she told him to await until she could contrive an opportunity for him to escape. She stepped out and just passed the sentinel, when she engaged him in conversation, having by this means got him in a position between herself and the door, where the prisoner stood watching her cunning stratagem, the back of the sentinel being towards him. The moment that Elvira turned upon them, was the signal for the Colonel to make a desperate effort for his freedom! Ere the guard had time to right about for the purpose of securing the door, his prisoner had pounced upon him, and prostrated him backwards upon the ground! He then seized him by the throat, presented a pistol at his head, commanding him to be quiet, or he would blow out his brains!

This unexpected overthrow had well nigh bereft the poor sentinel of his wits—and it was some moments before he could promise obedience. The Colonel relaxed his hold,

allowed him to get up, and led him towards the door of the prison, into which he intended to thrust him; but the treacherous Mexican, considering such promises under the peculiar circumstances of the case not worth abiding by, with his left hand suddenly drew a macheta from its sheath, and had raised it to plunge into his antagonist's breast, when the colonel adroitly seized his clasped hand, turned it, and when the blow descended the steel pierced the heart of the Mexican, and he fell a bloody corpse! Dragging the body across the prison threshold, he made fast the door, and in a few moments afterward he had rejoined his fair liberator, and was conducted by her to his released companions, who welcomed him with subdued but joyous exclamations. All of which was performed in a much shorter space of time than we have occupied in relating it.

Meanwhile another scene was being enacted on the premises of Senor Espindola. Having left the fair Rosalia Granville in rather a critical situation we must again lift the curtain, and watch the progress of the monster who had invaded the place of her repose. The moment that she saw the inhuman wretch approach, she arose suddenly from a reclining posture, and with a courage she was not aware of possessing, she demanded of the intruder, in firm tones, his errand there.

'Do not trouble thyself to rise, fair maiden,' said Canales, in the softest tones his rugged voice could make use of; 'although thou art the captive of the famed Ranchero Chieftain, yet he would behave towards thee with all due tenderness; therefore, my pretty one salute me with a kiss.'

'Approach me not, wretch!' said Rosalia, still undaunted.

'I cannot allow thee to use such harsh terms to my face, when I could not find it in my heart to speak so ill of thee; therefore if thou art too modest to bestow the first kiss upon thy lover, he will upon those

sweet lips impress the first token of that affection, which must exist between us, himself; pardon the liberty, but—and the villain, without finishing the sentence, ventured yet nearer Rosalia, who receded not a single step, but with a determined and resolute expression gazed upon the monster.

'Oh, I prithee do not look so fiercely,' he added; a countenance so surpassingly lovely as thine should be all sweetness when in presence of thy adorer.'

Another moment transpired and he was beside her, and was on the point of throwing his brutal arms about her neck, when she stepped back a pace—a poniard of steel held firmly in her right hand glistened above her head!—she was about to strike it to the heart of the infamous man! but the sudden noise of many footsteps in the adjoining apartment arrested her arm, and caused the wretch to start back in terror! He heard their voices, and at once recognized that they spoke the language of his enemies—heavy blows upon the door which was the only barrier between them added to his confusion and alarm!

'Hell and furies!' he exclaimed; 'what can be the meaning of this? Ah! I am betrayed! Treason! Guards, ho! But there is one way of escape left! Canales is yet free!'

Uttering these and similar exclamations he sprang towards the opposite part of the room, and pushing one side a heavy oaken chest, he lifted a trap, and quickly disappeared through the floor!

The trap had scarcely fallen above his head, when the liberated Americans burst into the room, and Colonel Granville and his beloved daughter met once more in fond embrace! She quickly pointed out the way by which Canales had effected his escape. One moment sooner in the movements of his enemy and he would have been bearded in his own den! On trying to lift the trap they found that he had taken the wise precaution to make it fast on the under side.

'To horse! to horse!' was the first order of Colonel Granville, and taking Rosalia by the hand, they fled from the house toward the clump of trees which concealed the requisite number of fleet steeds! But a few moments time had elapsed when all of the Americans were firmly seated in Mexican saddles, and dashing off at full gallop toward the forest!

Meanwhile, however, the alarmed Rancheros had not been idle, for the Americans had hardly issued from the quarters of Canales, when the voice of that chieftain was heard arousing his men in thunder tones.—Quickly all but the unconscious and prostrate sentinels obeyed his call—the bugle sounded an alarm, and many of the Rancheros were soon in the saddle, and led by Canales galloped off in pursuit of the flying fugitives; but the latter had got the start and the advantage of fleetier steeds, and just as they entered the forest a shower of escopeta balls from the pursuers fell harmlessly in their rear. Fortunately, the Americans had taken the only wide path through the wood, and soon they sped across the plain beyond and into the main road leading direct to the city of Monterey. Canales soon saw that to continue the pursuit would be useless, for with their present speed the fugitives would reach the main army of the Americans, which was already encamped before the battlements of the doomed city!

Canales returned to the ranch, foaming and fretting like a chafed tiger! His anger knew no bounds, and before his assembled fore, and by the light of torches, he commenced an investigation of the causes which had led to such disastrous results. The still unconscious sentinels were brought and laid upon the ground before him, and yet the removal disturbed them not, for they slept on as soundly and snored as lustily as ever they did in their lives! Canales, on beholding those, whom he supposed his most trusty followers, in such a situation, was astonished beyond measure! In his rage, he cruelly

ordered their head to be chopped off while in their slumbers! as a most fearful warning to those who might thereafter be found asleep while performing guard duty!

The dreadful mandate was about to be executed—heavy machetas already were in the hands of the executioners! when Elvira suddenly made her appearance, and knelt before the cruel chieftain, to whom, with tears of compassion streaming from her eloquent eyes, she plead for the lives of the condemned! She suggested to him the reasonable probability that some cause beyond their control had produced this profound and seemingly unnatural sleep! Perhaps, plead she, they have been drugged!—perhaps poisoned!—for notwithstanding all the noise and confusion which the event had made, they still were wrapped in repose!

Elvira's suggestions were followed up, by a plea from old Espindola, who declared his belief that the 'northern barbarians' absolutely possessed the wonderful power of putting their enemies asleep by merely looking at them, and even by an effort of the will.—This mysterious power, he said, the barbarians called Mesmerism, and he had learned of its miraculous effects from some papers and books, printed in the barbarian tongue, and which Donna Elvira, who understood it, had read to him!

There was something so extraordinary in all this that Canales countermanded the order; and, in truth, he was credulous enough to put some confidence in Espindola's explanation of the matter. He thought it even more probable than the suggestion which the Senorita had advanced, for he had himself heard something of the remarkable power known to the 'barbarians.' However, ludicrous as Espindola's suggestion seemed under the circumstances, it served to save the lives of the sleeping Rancheros!

Twenty-four hours elapsed ere they awoke! and supposing that they had taken but a short nap, they were much amazed to find themselves assembled together, away from

their posts, their escopetas gone, and the whole troop decamped, and gone, whither they knew not; all of which puzzled their stupid brains exceedingly, until arousing old Espindola, the mystery and all consequent matters were explained, particularly that part of his having been the means of deterring Canales from putting into execution his order for their decapitation! They all coincided with Senor Espindola in regard to their having been 'mesmerized,' for they all agreed that they had never felt so strangely on going to sleep in all their lives!

And what were the thoughts of the Senorita Elvira Espindola on reviewing the scenes of that eventful night, of which she had been the sole cause and the chief person in their execution? No one had suspected or even dreamed that she had any agency in the matter, consequently she had nothing to fear. One act which had been committed she exceedingly regretted—the death of the sentinel—but that was unavoidable; and moreover had he lived he might have been her accuser. And now it was all over she endeavored to analyze the motives which had impelled her, at the hazard of her own life, not only to set free the avowed enemies of her country, but to jeopardize the lives of those who were in arms to drive the northern

invaders from the soil. Still she knew that the Ranchero chieftain and his followers were no better than a troop of banditti—that they would quite as readily pillage a Mexican cathedral of its sacred ornaments, or rob the government's treasury of its gold, as to capture a train belonging to the invaders! Yet, the knowledge of this might induce her again to act as she did after the Rancheros attack upon the Light Dragoons with poisoned lances, but this alone did not seem to justify her in her last great act. But, thought she, there was one of her own sex, an innocent and beauteous maiden, to protect; and, strange though it may appear, one for whom she had conceived all the affection that a sister could have bestowed.—The maiden's father, too, she felt as if she could again hazard much even for his sake. But why, she could not answer to herself! This mystery it shall be our particular care to unravel in a future chapter.

Before Donna Elvira sought repose after the escape of the prisoners, she knelt before the little altar of her room, and prayed that the American maiden and her father might escape the dread calamities of the bloody war that was already raging in more than one section of that unhappy Republic!

CHAPTER IX.

Suspicion of Senor Espindola. Donna Elvira's Ramble in the Forest. The Deserted Battle Plain. Startling Sounds. Discovery of the young American Officer. Sympathy of the Senorita. His rapid Recovery, under the care of Elvira. She conducts him to the Casa. A Willing Prisoner.

MORNING dawned, and the ranch was again free from the bustle and confusion of the several previous days, the whole troop of Rancheros having departed before the grey light of morn was visible in the east, in search of new adventures, leaving the Senor Espindola, Donna Elvira, and a few Indian domestics, its sole occupants.

'Whither art thou going, my child?' enquired Espindola, as Donna Elvira threw a mantilla over her shoulders, and adjusting her veil, as if for a morning's visit to the village.

'The morning is so lovely,' she answered, 'I thought I would run to the forest and gather some wild flowers.'

'Bin—go, but thee must not tarry long; for, now that our guests have departed, without thy merry company it will be quite dull and lonely here.'

'I hope they will never return to our home, padre.'

'By San Diego, I hope otherwise! the Rancheros pay me well. Thou shouldst think as I do, Elvira; thou dost not remember all my gold is for thee.'

'As I have said before, father, they are but a troop of banditti—and their mode of warfare, according to their own confession,

is but to pillage ranchos, rob travellers, and even to murder! all of which is done under the false pretext that they are battling the invader for the good of their country.'

'Ah, my child, thee must give heed to what thy tongue uttereth; I have marked thy unwonted curiosity of late; and I have my suspicion, Elvira, that thee wast not entirely ignorant of the strange events that have transpired here; I shouldst be unwilling for the great Chieftain to have the grounds for suspecting thee that I have. Therefore, my child, be cautious for thy sake and for mine. I know thou art a brave girl—a wise girl—and, in truth, a good girl—and knoweth right from wrong; but we must yet loan the Rancheros our place for a rendezvous. Shouldst I refuse my life were not the value of one poor maravedi. You now understandeth, my child—blessings be ever upon thee—go, and be merry as the birds—I love to see thee happy—but tarry not long.'

Uttering these words, the old man kissed the fair forehead of Elvira, and she hied away to the wood, not altogether for the purpose she had avowed, but to see if the Rancheros were in ambush, ready to fall upon any small body of their enemies, who might venture to pass the Glen of the Spring, and that, in such an emergency, she might

be near by to render assistance to those who might be wounded by envenomed lances.

With a buoyant step she entered the wood and continued her way through a little foot-path which led to the very spot where Clifton's corps of Light Dragoons had encamped on the night after their victory over the Rancheros. She had a lingering hope that the Dragoons might still be encamped there, but on reaching the plain she found that it was completely deserted, and the only traces left of their having been there, was the trodden grass and torn ground where the battle raged, and where the Americans had bivouacked.

Her heart was sad, indeed, as she wandered and lingered around the spot; and tears—she knew not why—started from her eyes and bedewed her beauteous cheeks. It seemed as if she stood on hallowed ground—there had been a charm connected with it perfectly inexplicable to her; but now all appeared as lonely and gloomy as a church-yard; yet she tarried there as would a lover over the newly turfed grave of the fair one who had while a bright and beautiful being knitted his soul to hers.

An hour passed, of gloom and sadness to her heart, and she directed her light steps towards the glen—but all was as lonely hither, and in the pass beyond, as on the deserted plain. She then turned and entered the forest by another path than that by which she had come, and with a heavy heart bent her footsteps towards her home. She had proceeded but a short distance when her attention was suddenly arrested by the dead body of a Mexican lying directly across the path. At once she recognized that it was one of the Rancheros belonging to Canales' band. Intending to acquaint the Senor Espindola of this circumstance, she continued her way towards the ranch. Three rods further were hardly gained, when her ears caught the sound of a strange and dismal voice. It startled her considerably at first, but thinking that it might possibly proceed

from a human being in distress, she halted, and summoning all the courage in her nature, she began cautiously to approach the point whence the strange sound seemed to come. She had scarcely advanced ten steps when she beheld at a short distance the form of a youth reclining at the foot of the trunk of a large tree. His face was pale and haggard, and his eyes glared with a feeble and sickly light. The maiden ran towards him, and it required not a second look to recognize in the sufferer the form and features of the youthful officer with whom she had conversed but two days previously!

It was a sad sight, even to a daughter of his enemy, to behold the change which a few hours had wrought in Henry Allston. He was, besides being bruised, half famished—not having tasted food for more than two days; his lips were parched and his tongue was dry, for not a drop of water had passed them during this period. The blow which felled him to the earth while the horse was galloping on with all speed had rendered him perfectly senseless for twelve hours; and on awaking to consciousness he found that it was with pain and difficulty that he could move his limbs. With considerable exertion, however, he succeeded in dragging himself from the thick shrubbery into which he had fallen, and to lie down at the foot of the tree, where he supposed he should yield up his latest breath. He here fell into a profound slumber from which he did not awake for twelve hours more. When his eyes were again opened they only beheld him in a still more wretched situation; and the horrible thought rushed into his brain that he must die that most terrible of deaths—the want of sustenance! Rather would he have died on that blood-stained field where he had fought his first battle! and he even regretted that a lovely angel, as he almost deemed her, came to save him from a death by poison! He might, perhaps, crawl to the Rancheros' rendezvous, but he thought a more certain

if less horrible death would await him there. No, no—he preferred dying in that lone forest to trusting himself in their barbarous hands! and he gave himself up to despair and death, when the light form of some one flitting by attracted his attention—a ray of hope re-kindled within him; and his eye was again lighted up, on hearing the sound. Presently, through the interlaced branches of the thick-leaved trees, he caught a glimpse of a female passing with hurried steps. He uttered a cry—but it was a feeble one—he made another effort and succeeded in arresting the attention of the strange female—she turned and came towards him!

Hope and joy filled his heart when he beheld that same bright being approach him who had once before saved him from the jaws of death.

There was surprise and joy, too, commingled with grief, manifested on the countenance of Donna Elvira, at again meeting the interesting stranger—surprised to find him in that solitary forest when she supposed him far away among his comrades—grief to behold him, who but so short a period previously was the very ideal she had conceived of one whom she could love with her whole heart, now so pale, so haggard, so helpless!

In another moment the fair girl was beside the hapless youth—her delicate hands pressed his throbbing temples—and his head was pillowed upon her bosom. She soon saw that it was hunger and thirst more than bodily wounds, which had thus enfeebled and almost emaciated his features. Leaving him for a moment she gathered a pile of moss and dry leaves at the foot of the tree, and covering them with her *panuelo*, formed a pillow whereon she laid his aching head; then, telling him she would presently return she hurried away toward the ranch with a speed on which she thought the youth's life or death depended.

Unobserved by her father she entered the house, where she obtained food, water, and

a bottle of choice wine, with which she hied back to the spot where the American officer helplessly reclined. The wine was held to his lips and he drank of the life-instilling beverage. This immediately revived him from the partial lethargy in which he had sunk. He now partook of the food and his gnawing hunger was appeased; he drank of the water and his burning thirst was quenched; and she bathed his feverish brow while he ate and drank. A short time only elapsed and she had the heart-cheering delight of perceiving indications of returning strength—his cheeks though yet pale were not so pallid; his eyes were no longer lighted with a sickly unnatural lustre, but beamed with gratitude and affection; his voice, though still feeble had not that husky, choked tone which first startled her in the wood, but with little exertion could now converse with her whom he looked upon with reverence as his ministering angel, and to whom he once more owed his life.

Elvira was happy—very happy—in listening to his words, and to observe that the passing of each moment re-invigorated his mental as well as physical faculties. Pages would it require to detail all that passed between them in the comparatively blissful hours that followed; for she left him not until the sun was receding from the meridian; yet in all their conversation thus far had either revealed name, rank, or any particulars regarding themselves. At length the maiden arose to leave him and said,

‘When it is twilight I will come again and lead you to a place of comparative safety where you can remain until you shall have gained sufficient strength to enable you to rejoin your companions.’

She sighed deeply as this last sentence was uttered.

‘Ah, sweet and benevolent creature, whoever you are, tell me thy name before you depart,’ said the youthful officer with affectionate earnestness. ‘Were you the daughter of our direst and most revengeful foe,

still I must regard you ever with a love as warm and fervent as ever fired the heart of man.'

'Call me Elvira—will not this suffice?' she asked.

'Nay, sweetest Elvira, though I thank you even for that one word—the name of her whom I shall ever reverence—I must know more.'

'I am but a simple maiden,' she replied, 'the only child of the Senor Espindola, proprietor of a *ranch* but a short distance hence.'

'As I suspected—and his estate is the first beyond the forest?' he continued, enquiringly.

'You have said aright—but I have not told you all—my father entertains the Rancheros of the Poisoned Lance when in this vicinity—the Chief and his subordinates have their quarters beneath our roof, and their followers pitch their tents in our fields. But, believe me, he knows not the extent of their wickedness and treachery; neither does he take any part in the war! His great desire appears to be to amass wealth, and the Rancheros' gold assists him greatly to swell his already rich coffers! The love of gold is his weakness, and all that can be said against him. He is quite aged, and sometimes I am persuaded by his language and acts, already in his years of second childhood. As I before said I am his only child; and I have never known mother, sister, or brother. I have, I confess, conceived a perfect hatred for Canales and his band of desperadoes; and have more than once defeated schemes of theirs, which are too horrible to be mentioned, and which I supposed were wholly unknown to the Senor Espindola.'

'Brave, noble, generous hearted girl!' exclaimed Allston; 'I thank you for this revelation; and may the God of Heaven repay you for all your praiseworthy deeds.'

'And now I would know your name?' said Elvira.

Allston with pleasure readily complied,

and on further questioning revealed to her many interesting particulars connected with himself and family, to which she listened with eager attention. The interview at length was brought to a close, and once more returned home, where she apologized for her long absence to her impatient father, as ingeniously as possible, and without departing from the truth.

The few hours that intervened after the maiden's departure and the twilight seemed like so many days to Allston; but as all spaces of time have an ending so did this; and when the first glimmer of a star in the heavens on that evening was discerned by him, it heralded the approach of Donna Elvira; and had years of separation passed since they last met, the re-union could scarcely have been a happier one.

From the beaming of the first star of evening until all the lamps of Heaven shone out with their wonted brilliancy, seemed a brief period indeed—for our incipient lovers, beneath the shades of that forest, tarried until the western sky was no longer tinted with the faintest ray of departing day. Sombre night had now subdued the last grey shadow of twilight, and by the purer light of the stars, the young invalid subaltern, was guided slowly through the forest paths by the fairest of Mexico's fair. Their hands were affectionately clasped, and she allowed his arm to rest gently about her neck to support his enfeebled frame. Occasionally they stopped that he might gain relief from the exertion. At length they reached the verge of the wood at a point most contiguous to Senor Espindola's dwelling; traversing the plain she guided him stealthily through a grove of orange and other fruit trees which extended within a few yards of the *casa*.—Entering by a door in the rear she conducted him up a narrow stairway, into an apartment that had remained unoccupied for several years, and which she had rendered comfortable solely for his reception during the hours she had left the agreeable stranger



Hero of Buena Vista.



Chapultepec.



Capture of a Mexican General.



Landing at Vera Cruz.



Execution



Hero of Buenos Aires



Meeting at Rio de Janeiro



Capture of a British General

in the wood. This apartment was seldom entered, except by Elvira, and could not be reached without first passing through the one occupied by her, without an ascension to the casement by a ladder on the outside. The key was always kept in her own possession, for in it she stored her wardrobe, valuables, etc., and it was, perhaps, the safest place of concealment for a gentleman under her charge about the premises.

'This must be your prison until health be fully restored to you,' said Elvira, whispering, after they had entered. 'You need fear no intrusion, except from your keeper.'

'I trust my keeper will be your friend?' said he, enquiringly.

'Oh, yes; I shall perform that duty myself; depend upon it, I shall not trust your safety in other hands; but let me caution you—be careful about exposing yourself at the casement during the day. If the Rancheros return, and they should, perchance, discover you here, your life might be the forfeit.'

'I will govern myself faithfully by your directions, my sweet physician and gentle monitress,' said he, pressing her hand to his lips; but rather would I die than that you should hazard—'

'Fear not for me,' interrupted Elvira; 'for whatever I may do here I have excuses ready prepared to make all safe so far as I am concerned; I have remedies for each emergency that may occur, within all possible bounds. So, my caged one, do but what I require and no harm will come to either of us.'

'Your wishes are my laws,' said he, as

he gazed with wonder and delight upon this remarkable girl.

She left him for a few minutes, and then returned bringing him a delicate but delicious repast of which he partook sparingly.

Another hour of happiness they passed in each other's society, when the last farewell for the night was spoken, and they separated.

Before Elvira sought repose she knelt before the crucifix of her own boudoir, and uttered a fervent prayer for the restoration to health of him, whom she had so providentially rescued from death, and in whom she had become so warmly interested.

Let us for a moment look in upon the object of her devotions—he, too, knelt before the invisible Jehovah—thanking Him for sending an angelic being of this earth to save him from perishing, and uttering a petition in her behalf. It was a sincere and eloquent invocation—it came spontaneously from the utmost depths of his soul!

Upon the luxurious couch which had been so kindly prepared for him he stretched his enervated limbs. Sleep—sweet, restoring sleep—soon shut out from his mind the truly remarkable situation in which he was placed. Never did sweeter slumbers make unconscious the senses of the youth, for his dreams were of a being of celestial beauty. He would have preferred sleeping on—sleeping ever—than that such visions should be disturbed!

Leaving our lovers for a time—for we must now in good earnest call them so—we must onward to more stirring scenes, where others of our characters are performing conspicuous parts.

CHAPTER X.

Siege of Monterey. An Unwritten Incident of that ever memorable Occasion. Stratagem of the Light Dragoon to overthrow the Mexican Lancers. The Chapparral. The Concealed Battery. Pretended Flight of the Light Dragoons. Signal Defeat of the Lancers. Another Skirmish and subsequent Flight of the Enemy. Clifton at his Quarters. Visit from an Irish Acquaintance. News of Col. Granville's Arrival in Monterey.



HE storming of Monterey will ever be regarded by historians of this era of the world as one of the greatest and most gallant achievements of arms performed in the nineteenth century by any nation; and to find its parallel they must look to the wonderful exploits of the same troops, or their own countrymen, at Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, or at Chapultepec.—Even the grand army of Napoleon never won victories against such odds; and these will be cited by future generations in evidence of the indomitable perseverance, skill and valor of the soldiers of our great and glorious republic. The histories of all the wars in Europe scarcely furnishes a parallel to the dread exposure to which our brave countrymen submitted themselves in climbing the steepes of the Bishop's Palace, in the very face of Mexican batteries; or, in pushing onward through the streets of the city itself, where breastworks and batteries were erected to oppose their progress.

But we will not go over the details of that three days' siege, which have been given by an eye-witness and actor in the scene, more faithfully and graphically than it is within our power to do; but we have one or two incidents to describe, which affects somewhat the course of our story.

On the second day of that ever-memorable siege, while the musketry rattled, and a hundred pieces of artillery were thundering together, a considerable force of Mexican cavalry were seen to sally forth from the city, under cover of one of the Mexican batteries, and to ride towards a squadron of light dragoons which had done good service during the morning by drawing the fire of the enemy, and otherwise supporting the artillery and infantry corps. The Mexicans approached no nearer than rifle shot distance of the dragoons, when they suddenly wheeled and rode back into the city.

This singular movement did not escape the commander of the dragoons, who was none other than our old friend, Clarence Clifton, who, with his company, had arrived most opportunely to share in the glory of the victory. That the movement of the Mexican cavalry had some meaning in it, touching his corps, he did not doubt, for he judged them, to all appearances, to be a body of men with whom he had had a previous acquaintance—in truth he believed them to be the Rancheros of the Poisoned Lance, who had already been once sorely defeated by his invincible troops. Their return to the city was, as he rightly conjectured, because they also discovered the indomitable foe who had once dealt death and destruc-

tion in their ranks. Canales was afraid to make a second charge with his present force, and his object in returning was to get the aid of other lancers that he might completely overwhelm and annihilate the enemy who had so discomfited him.

Clifton, too, divined the object of his return, and his eyes for a time were bent upon the place where he re-entered the city.—Many minutes had not elapsed when the Rancheros again sallied forth, strengthened by two squadrons of cavalry, each of which being superior in point of numbers to the dragoons.

The moment that Clifton saw this formidable force approaching him, he resolved not to engage them if he could avoid it. He doubted not the result, but he was satisfied the conflict must be a bloody one and if he gained a victory it would cost him dear! and he did not like to risk his brave band against such unequal odds. If by stratagem he could defeat them it were better than that one man of his command should fall!

This idea quickly suggested to his mind a plan. At the distance of half a mile there is a thick chapparal, in which had been concealed by order of the American general-in-chief, a battery of four howitzers, which had been planted in a position that would prevent any reinforcements from entering the city, and also to cut off the retreat of any of the enemy's troops should they attempt it. The road wound round a part of the chapparal, and there was a mule path running at a right angle with the road directly through it. At the junction of the road and path, on each side of the latter, were the points on which the battery was stationed.

When the Mexican cavalry had galloped within a hundred yards and prepared for a mighty charge, the Light Dragoons wheeled off into sections and rode off with all possible speed down the road leading by the chapparal. The Mexicans thinking that their enemies were attempting to make their escape followed hotly and madly in pursuit.

Onward both forces went in full gallop, until the front platoon of the dragoons reached the mule path, when they filed off into the chapparal. The Mexicans saw this manoeuvre, and thinking it the simplest thing in the world to turn it to their advantage, they ordered one squadron of cavalry around to the opposite side of the thicket, and thus completely entrap the Americans. But our hero had fully calculated upon this emergency, and after hurriedly detailing his stratagem to the officer in command of the battery, he continued on the course of the path.

The main body of the dragoons hurried on, and reaching the point where the enemy had filed off, the order was given to follow, when the deafening report of a cannon was heard, as if almost in their midst, followed by a shower of iron hail, which threw confusion, terror and death into their ranks!—another and another followed in rapid succession! The carnage was dreadful—although but the work of a moment—mangled horses and riders fell into heaps, and for rods were strewed along the ground—the living, the dead and the dying lying promiscuously together!

More than one-third of their number had thus fallen—and those who could extricate themselves from this scene of carnage, were quickly flying in the direction whence they came!

Meanwhile the Light Dragoons had not been idle—they crossed the chapparal, and had no sooner reached its verge, when they beheld the detached squadron of Lancers, drawn up in battle array, ready to charge into their midst, as soon as they should be driven from their covert, by the main body who were to attack them in their rear, not suspecting the terrible fate which was at the moment befalling their friends!

Without exposing his force beyond the verge of the wood, Clifton formed his men in a line as nearly parallel to the enemy as the thicket would permit, and ordered them to try the efficacy of their rifles upon the

opposing ranks! At the first fire the Lancers were considerably annoyed, but they stood their ground, thinking that the dragoons would speedily be routed from their covert. Another galling fire from the chaparral, and they were obliged to wheel about and fall back to a distance beyond the range of the deadly rifle. But they had no sooner shown their backs to the dragoons, when the latter galloped from the thicket, with their rifles already slung, and naked sabres in their hands! The lancers turned to charge upon them, but they were already too much confused by the fire they had sustained from the rifles, to make a vigorous one, and their lances were easily turned aside by the heavy sabres of the dragoons, who met their charge with an energy so determined that the lancers were quickly scattered in all directions, leaving a score or two of their slain upon the field! By far the greater number who escaped fled in the direction the main body had taken in order to rejoin them. But what was their amazement on beholding them flying toward the city, from a cause they had not yet suspected.—They, too, joined in the flight, but they were not destined to reach the city; for before they had approached near enough to be under cover of the battlements in the possession of their friends, their progress was checked, by an onset from the Light Dragoons who dashed in among them, causing no little havoc, and completely changing the direction of their flight!

Still pursued, the defeated lancers had no other course to pursue than to dash ahead by the concealed battery, where they had met so signal an overthrow. They were now scattered so widely apart that the howitzers could not be brought to bear on any considerable number at a time, though several were made to join their companions in the sleep of death!

Those who were so fortunate as to escape alive from these sanguinary events spurred on their steeds, and flew away beyond the

reach of their pursuers and the city they had so unwisely left.

This achievement (which we do not find even alluded to in the despatches of the general-in-chief, which omission we marvel at) did not cost the Americans the loss of a single man, and few only received slight injuries, while not one was wounded seriously! The small detachment of artillerists who worked the howitzers had performed their part with wonderful skill, considering they received but a moment's notice from Clifton of his hastily conceived plan to punish the Rancheros, and those who had so readily joined them to complete his overthrow!

When the siege was over, and the city had capitulated, and the Americans had made it their quarters, of course the chief topics of conversation among the victors, were the various deeds of this or that corps, or this and that officer or soldier, during the siege, but there was no achievement which elicited more wonder and applause, than the bold stratagem which Clifton and his bold dragoons had put into execution with the most signal success. The artillerists of the concealed battery also shared in the praises which this remarkable event had elicited.

Thus our hero was made and acknowledged a *genuine hero!* Verily, to use that rarely quoted expression, 'Truth is stranger than Fiction.'

Two days after the capitulation, Captain Clifton, who occupied for his quarters, a pleasant residence not far distant from the *Puente Purissima*, was quietly seated towards evening by himself, conning over the startling events which had so rapidly succeeded each other, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a son of the Emerald Isle, who from his dress it was rather difficult for the officer to decide whether to take him for a soldier or civilian, or whether he served under the American or Mexican banner; for it was composed of the sombrero

nd calzeronas of the latter, and the jacket, est and boots of the latter.

The moment he found himself in the presence of the dragoon officer, he snatched off his broad-brimmed sombrero, commenced cowering, scraping and scratching his head, and said,

'The top o' the mornin' to yer 'onor.'

'My good fellow, you forget that it is evening,' remarked Clifton.

'Faix, then I am bothered a bit more, for it's always marnin' in ould Ireland whin the sun rises, but things are oopside down shure in this bog-throttin' country.'

'But the sun is now setting.'

'Oh, be Jabers, thin the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, shure?'

'No, that is west, and this is east,' said Clifton, pointing in the two directions.

'Och, bathershin! thin I wonder if that's not oop, (pointing downward) and that doon, (pointing upward). By the powers, thin, in this country, I shall be always wrong whin I'm right, and right whin I'm wrong.'

'Perhaps, then, you are wrong in making this visit here?' questioned Clifton.

'If yer 'onor's name is Captin' Clifton, thin I'm right, shure.'

'Clifton is my name,' said the officer, 'but tell me, Teddy, Phelim, Barney, or whatever your name may be—'

'Pat, yer 'onor.'

'Well, Pat, what is your business with me?'

'I'll be afther tellin' ye now, directly; but have ye forgotten Pat intirely? By the powers, now, I know'd ye, 'fore I clapp'd eyes on yer 'onor.'

'I certainly do not know you, and if ever I did, you have escaped my remembrance altogether.'

'A long day will Pat be after livin' whin he forgits yer 'onor, or yer 'onor's big lither thrunk, that I had the 'onor o' bringing on my shoulder from the Ivergreen to the Colonel's cottage, and a mighty heavy one it wur to be shure.'

'True—I remember it well, but didn't I pay you for it?'

'That yer 'onor did like a thrue gintleman.'

'Well, Pat, what brought you hither?'

'My legs yer 'onor, barrin' a bit of a piece I rode on a Mexikin jackoss.'

'I mean for what purpose are you here?'

'Now that's a pooty question to 'ax of a broth of a boy like Pat McCrickey, whin ivery mither's son of the McCrickeys, from Saint Patrick McCrickey—for that wur the big saint's name what killed all the snakes—down to his great grandad's great grand-son—that's me yer 'onor—were bould waryers, and siventeen of my ancestors on mither's side were killed at the bloody fight of Watherloo! There's a fightin family for ye; and now, yer 'onor, shall I disgrace the blood of the McCrickeys, by not sakein' a bit of a brush meself, jist by way of kapein' up the sperit of the family. That's what's brought me here, yer 'onor and it's this blis-sid marnin' that I've come.'

'And what is your business with me, Mr. McCrickey?'

'That's jist now what I'll be afther tellin' yer 'onor.'

'Have you any letters?'

'Not a leththur, yer honor; but I've a bit of a beauthiful missage in my pate, that I'm thinkin' ye'll be mighty glad to hear.'

'Well, well, I'm all impatient to hear it.'

'I see ye are, and I'll till ye at wunst without any more palaver. You see the Major (I mane the Colonel, axin' his 'onor's pardon,) my masther that is, has just come to this mighty quare lookin' city, and he would be afther seein' yer 'onor at wunst.'

'This is good news, indeed! Where is he now?' ejaculated Clifton. 'I will report to him immediately.'

'Can you spake Mexikin?' enquired Pat, gravely.

'No, you numskull; there's no such language; the Mexicans speak Spanish.'

'Spake Spanish, do they?' reiterated Pat,

scratching his red pate. 'Och, be Jabers, I knew they walked Spanish sometimes, but I niver knew they talked it.'

'Never mind their language. You can guide me to the place where he is quartered.'

'Quarthered! did ye say quarthered now? no, be Jabers, the Colonel wasn't quarthered whin' I lift him! There's no tillin' how soon he may be quarthered if these sarpint Mexikins git him. He's made escape from being quarthered wunst already, and the divils intinded to quarther me, too. I'll till you arl about it. You see——'

'Not now, Pat, some other time I'll listen to you with pleasure,' interrupted Clifton, getting impatient. 'Lead the way—I will follow.'

'Mayhap you'd like to see the young led- dy?' suggested Pat, after they had issued into the street.

'Who? what lady?' enquired Clifton.

'First be afther tellin' me the prettiest flower that iver blossomed on the Colonel's estate?'

'Well,' said the captain, humoring the Irishman; 'perhaps it was a dahlia, a camel- lia or a violet.'

'Not a bit of aither o' them, yer 'onor; it wasn't a Delia nor a Camilla, nor a Violet, but it was a *Rosy*, the swatest flower in all the land barrin' Kathleen O'Shane, and she's in Kilkenny, the darlint. Now yer oonderstands my manein.'

'And a very delicate way you have of expressing yourself,' remarked Clifton.

'Delikit? you may well say that. The McCrickey's wur ollers cilibrated for their dilikicy on pints touchin' the dare crathurs, yer 'onor.'

Clifton was not at a loss to comprehend from Pat's language that Rosalia Granville had undertaken the perils of the campaign, and he was not greatly surprised; yet had he known less of the heroic spirit which animated the soul of this resolute girl, he would have considered it strange indeed.

A short walk brought our hero and Pat to the mansion which had been selected as the temporary quarters of Colonel Granville and his *suite*.

CHAPTER XI.

A Happy Meeting in Monterey. A Stranger announced. The Monk. A Sudden Transformation. Romano Falcon in the presence of Clifton, Granville and Rosalia. News of Zeke Short and his party of Reconnaissance. A Ransom demanded for their Release. The Refusal. Singular bearing of Falcon. His sudden Departure.



YOU, indeed, was the meet-
of Captain Clifton and his old
friend, Colonel Granville, and
the beautiful Rosalia, in the
captured city of Monterey.—

Even black Sam's shining visage wore an
expression of delight, either because he saw
the happiness of his 'massa or missee, or
that he was glad to see even a familiar face
in that strange country.

'Ah, ha! my boy!' exclaimed the veteran
Colonel, the moment Clarence entered, and
darting forward to grasp his hand; 'glad to
meet you here in this newly acquired city of
ours; must condole with you, however, for
the loss of a few of your brave followers.—
You have stolen a march of me, and, as I
have to-day learned, had a smart brush or
two with the enemy before we could reach
the city. What think you now of your raw
recruits? Didn't I tell you there's fight in
every mother's son of em?'

'A braver corps was never led to battle!'
replied Clifton. 'There isn't a coward
among them; not one of them could be
made to turn his back upon a foe unless or-
dered by his commander!'

'I knew it! I knew it! I shall be rejoy-
ced when I see our whole battalion organ-
ized and in the field. I shall depend upon

you my dear Clifton to assist me. Remem-
ber—you are my subordinate now.'

'I shall be proud to obey so experienced
and gallant an officer,' replied Clifton.

'Tut, tut! no compliments, if you please.
None of your drawing room phrases while
we are on a campaign—plain speech—plain
actions, should ever characterize the true
soldier—a better understanding exists there-
by.'

'Politeness, father, I always thought to be
a qualification in the soldier,' remarked Ro-
salia.

'True, Rosa; and there is no politeness
so real as that which is couched in plain lan-
guage, and divested entirely of flattery,' re-
plied the Colonel, and turning to his friend,
he said, 'you perceive, Clarence, I have
brought along with me my military mentor
in petticoats; I couldn't persuade the little
amazon to remain at home, though I'm in-
clined to think that she more than once
wished herself there during the dangers of
our journey.'

'In that, father, you are certainly mistak-
en,' replied Rosalia; 'and you must confess
that my company has been agreeable.'

'Yes, yes, Rosy, except in those hours of
peril, when we were at a loss to know
whether our heads were our own or our in-

fernal enemies—the chance was decidedly against us. Then, I would have laid down my life with pleasure, had you been safe at home. Your presence, then, fairly unmanned me—I hadn't the courage of a goat. By the way, Clifton, you have not heard of our capture by those rascally Rancheros? If it had n't been for them I should have arrived here in time to have taken a part in the siege.'

'You surprise me,' said Clarence, 'this is the first intimation I have had of it.'

'It don't matter much, now, since we got off without a scratch,' resumed the Colonel; 'but the facts are simply these: our little escort was attacked by a band of these desperadoes in a narrow pass, about ten miles from Monterey; the place was one in which the rascally robbers had all the advantage; we couldn't get even a rifle to bear upon them. Consequently we were made prisoners, bound and conveyed to their quarters, and there thrust into a vile prison. A night or two afterwards, singular to relate, we made our escape through the ingenious management of a young, interesting, and exceedingly lovely Mexican lady.'

'This is truly wonderful!' exclaimed our hero; 'and the attack was made—'

'By a detachment belonging to the robber chief, under the command of one of his lieutenants,' interrupted Granville. 'They captured our train, which was not very valuable, however, and we, in return, took from him, in making our escape, a dozen fleet California horses, which will do you good to look at.'

'The coincidence is remarkable, truly,' said our hero, thoughtfully, his mind reverting to the beautiful creature who had saved his life and the lives of several of his men from the poisonous wounds inflicted by the lancers. 'Did you say that a young Mexican girl effected your liberty?'

'Yes,' answered Granville; 'and one whose countenance has made so deep an impression on my mind that I have scarcely ceased for a moment to think of her.'

'And if we are not mistaken in the lady, you have likewise good cause for remembering her, as well as your friend, Lieutenant Allston!'

'Alas!' sighed Clarence, 'I fear that his indiscretion has lost him his life!'

'His life?' ejaculated Granville; 'what mean you?'

'The gallant fellow left us, soon after our engagement with the Rancheros, and as I suspect, in pursuit of this strange and angelic being. Since which we have not seen or heard of him. If he has fallen into the hands of any of Canales' desperadoes, I fear that we shall never see him again.'

'This reminds me of the miniature of Allston's sister, which she had suspended from a chain about her neck, and which she shew to us with an air of pride and pleasure,' said Rosalia.

'Then there is hope that he is safe,' replied Clifton; 'under her protection I feel that I could trust him; but it is singular if he is so strangely infatuated that he neglects his duty by not reporting himself.'

'I fear your hopes are ill-grounded,' said Granville; 'for I questioned her concerning the whereabouts of two young officers, whose lives she told us she had saved, and she gave me to understand that they were with the main body of the American army before Monterey.'

'Well, well, I will yet hope for the best,' said Clifton; 'our army can ill afford to lose such a brave and gallant officer as Allston has proved himself.'

This conversation was here interrupted by the abrupt entrance of black Sam, who informed his master that a stranger at the door desired an interview with him.

'What does he look like, Sam?' asked the Colonel.

'Like de debbil wid bonnet and cloak on massa.'

'Oh, it must be one of the priests or monks of Monterey,' said Granville, 'you may bring him in Sam.'

Enveloped in cassock and cowl, with his head bent as if from old age, and supported by a staff, the stranger was shown into the apartment of our friends, by black Sam, who looked upon him with an eye of terror.

Colonel Granville arose to meet him when the pretended monk straitened up, and suddenly divesting himself of the borrowed habiliments of the cloister, and revealed the uniform of a Mexican officer. He was a noble looking individual, decidedly handsome in features, and stalwart and dignified in figure. Granville's hand involuntarily seized the hilt of his sword as he discovered the sudden transformation.

'Draw not thy weapon, *Senor*,' said the stranger; 'I assumed this garb that I might pass through *thy* city unmolested and unquestioned; having served its purpose I now throw it aside and appear before thee in my true character. I have heard of the armistice that hath been proclaimed, and have taken advantage of it to pay thee a visit on a matter which somewhat concerns several of thy friends.'

'And to whom am I indebted for this visit?'

'Romano Falcon!'

'Romano Falcon!' repeated Clifton, also grasping his sword. 'This man is the terror of the whole country!'

'Be not so rash, young man,' said this noted leader, with the utmost calmness. 'Captain Clifton, for that is thy name, if the description I have had of thy person, does not belie thee, my business will interest thee as well as thy Colonel. If ye are prepared to know its nature, without suspecting me of appearing here on an assassin's errand, I will impart it.'

'Be seated,' said the Colonel, who was as much astonished at the Chief's coolness, as he was at his exceeding temerity in appearing before him.

The Chief took the seat that was provided for him, and drawing a pair of clumsy pistols from his belt he laid them upon the table, saying—

'Pistols should never be worn in the presence of a lady;' and, bowing politely to the fair Rosalia, thus made known his errand. 'I have told ye, *Senors*, that ye are not unknown to me, although I have never had the pleasure of seeing either of thee before.'

'We certainly have never met,' said Granville; 'but will you be pleased to make known your business?'

'To be brief, then, thirteen men belonging to Captain Clifton's corps are my prisoners!' answered Romano.

'My party of reconnaissance!' exclaimed Clifton, pleased to hear that nothing worse had befallen them.

'These prisoners you wish to exchange for an equal number of ours?' suggested the Colonel. 'You should have applied to General Taylor; I am but a colonel serving under him.'

'None of *my* command are prisoners!' said Romano, haughtily.

'But many of your countrymen are,' pursued Granville.

'That is no business of mine,' answered the chief; 'my band is an independent organization; we war for that which our country hath ever denied us—justice, liberty, and protection! Since these essentials are denied us, we deem it no crime to war against our invaders, independently of the armies of a *pseudo* government.'

'What proposal have you to make in regard to your prisoners?' asked Granville.

'They must be ransomed by gold.'

'Indeed! and how much gold will purchase their freedom?'

'Fifty doubloons for the officer, and twenty for each of the men.'

'And is it by their request that this offer of a ransom is made?' questioned Granville.

'Believe it not; not one among them would give ten maravedis to escape from my power!'

'I glory in their courage; and I believe they would not even thank their officers to

free them on any terms with money,' replied the colonel with considerable warmth. 'Be assured the day is not far distant, when we shall have a brush with your independent cavaliers, as you style them, and after it is over you will sue for an exchange with us.'

'That is quite impossible; for we never risk ourselves in a conflict where there is the remotest probability of a defeat. This may be termed cowardice; but we fight not for glory, nor for military advancement——'

'For booty, I do not doubt,' interrupted Granville.

'Precisely—I was about to confess it,' said Romano with a smile. 'It appears, then, that I have this time come on a fruitless and bootyless errand.'

'You judge aright.'

'Wilt make no offer?'

'Not of gold?'

'What then?'

'We'll agree neither to hang or harm any dozen of your precious followers that may fall into our hands; moreover, we'll give each one a day's rations and set them at liberty.'

'Thou dost prize them lightly methinks,' replied Romano; 'their lives are in my power.'

'And yours in mine, if I but say the word!' replied Granville, a little excited; but, I will do no harm to the man who voluntarily places himself in my power.'

Romano arose, and politely bidding our friends adieu, he threw over him his cowl and cassock, and made his exit as suddenly as he appeared.

'That's the most singular mortal I ever encountered,' said Granville, as soon as the acknowledged robber had departed.

'His presumption is quite amusing,' replied Clifton; 'and if this man is the veritable robber, Romano Falcon, he is very unlike the descriptions given of his manners, person, &c. He doesn't appear to be just the man for a cutthroat, a brigand, or even a petty thief.'

'My life on it, he will not harm our friends who are in his power,' remarked Granville.

'One of them, at least, he will find a match for him; I refer to Zeke Short, my first lieutenant. His eyes and ears are ever open when one would think them shut. If he doesn't hit upon some scheme to free himself and comrades from this fellow's clutches, then the obstacles are insurmountable to any live Yankee.'

But we will not pursue this interview farther, the conversation beyond having no particular bearing upon the plot of our story. Our friends tarried but a few days at Monterey, the squadron of Light Dragoons to which they were attached being under orders to move onward toward Saltillo.

CHAPTER XII:

*Formation of Guerilla Bands. Santa Anna's cunning Policy revealed. Don Juli-
ano's Arrival at the Ranch. A Hellish Plot against Elvira. His Conspirators.
Henry and Elvira. The Hour for their Separation is appointed. Interesting Inter-
view. Pledge of Love. A Narrow Escape.*



SO UNEXPECTED was the fall of Monterey, that for a considerable time subsequent it almost paralyzed the energies of the Mexicans. The soldiers were getting tired of a war, in which they had invariably been defeated, and as there was neither glory nor money to be earned, not even sufficient of the latter to make life sufferable, many of them deserted from the regular army for the purpose of forming guerilla bands, or to join those already organized, believing that such a life afforded them more pleasures, more luxuries and more independence, and far less liable to constant defeats.

Consequently many were the bands that were organized, and most of the deserters, as well as of the discharged soldiery, whose terms of enlistment had expired, availed themselves of this course as a forlorn hope to better their condition.

So numerous and formidable were these bands becoming, that Santa Anna, who had at this critical juncture been unwisely permitted to pass into the county, resolved not only to oppose no obstacle in the formation

of these bands, but if possible turn them to his advantage. In pursuance of this plan he secretly communicated with the various guerilla chieftains, and promised them government protection if they would but gather their spoils from the enemy and from those States who had refused their quota of money and arms to sustain the supreme government of Mexico; moreover, he solicited them to lend a helping hand to the regular armies whenever engaged in battle.

Most of the chieftains complied readily with his wishes; for they considered it but a license, not only to harrass the enemy at their pleasure, but to plunder and run riot over a portion of their own territory.

The Ranchero Chieftain, Canales, was among the first eagerly to embrace such opportunities for a golden harvest that this state of things would offer, without running the risk of losing his neck. Accordingly, to augment his force, which had recently materially diminished, he despatched Juliano from his new theatre of action between Saltillo and San Luis Potosi, to his old rendezvous, the ranch of Senor Espindola, for the purpose of here making enlistments to his troop. With eight or ten followers to assist

him in drumming up recruits, Julianio arrived at the ranch, much to the regret of the Senorita Espindola, inasmuch as it might possibly lead to the discovery of her secret in regard to the young American, who had now been the object of her almost constant attention for a little more than a week.

On the day after Don Julianio's arrival he commenced laying a siege to the heart of the fair Elvira, importuning her on every occasion that he could speak with her. Don Julianio, as we have before hinted, was a heartless villain. He loved Elvira only as the professed libertine loves his mistress; there was another reason for loving her, to him a more potent one—Elvira was, so far as he could learn, the sole heiress to old Espindola's estate; and he likewise believed that the old man's miserly propensities had gained him much gold, which he surmised must be concealed somewhere about the premises.

Some days had elapsed before he could gain more than an opportunity to say a few words with her—indeed, she was not so frequently seen tripping about the ranch as formerly—the reason thereof he did not mistrust, but which our readers fully understand. The Senor Espindola, on enquiry, told him that she had grown suddenly reserved and even melancholy, and passed her hours of leisure in her own apartment. The truth is, however, she was at those periods in the adjoining apartment, and whenever she was summoned by her father, she made it a point not to make any answer to his call until she could regain her own room.

Each morning, after the breakfast hour was over, she invariably went to her garden to cull a bouquet of flowers; and, instead of being placed in the vase upon her own table as formerly, they now made fragrant the chamber of her prisoner, who was daily growing more dear to her sight. On one of these occasions, the moment she entered the garden, she was saluted by Don Julianio,

who, with a pleasant smile thus accosted her:

'Methinks you pay unusual attention to the products of this lovely flower garden, my fair Senorita. Mexican ladies give preference to diamonds, rubies, and other sparkling gems, over these frail flowers which blossom, wither and perish in a day.'

'Brilliant and beautiful, truly, are precious stones from the lapidary's hand,' said Elvira, 'but they only please the eye.'

'And what more can be said of the virtue of flowers?'

'They impart a double pleasure; their fragrance, which cold gems do not possess, is as much to be valued as their unrivalled beauty; besides, there is an endless variety of flowers, even in our land, while the products of all the mines in the world, yet discovered, does not furnish even a score of different kinds of precious stones.'

'But consider their imperishable nature.'

'True; but while one blossom perishes another is unfolded to our view; our gardens and forests, in nearly all seasons, teem with these sweetest and most beautiful of Nature's ornaments. But, I am wasting time which might be better employed. Adios, Don Julianio.'

With these words Elvira turned to depart.

'Stay but for a moment, my fair one,' entreated Don Julianio; 'I have that to impart to thee which deeply concerns myself and I hope——'

'But that which concerns you,' interrupted Elvira, surmising his aim, 'doest not in the least degree affect me.'

'Ah! but it does concern thee more than thou canst imagine. Elvira—I love thee!'

'You have told me of that an hundred times, and in as many different ways; and I believed you just as much as I do now and no more.'

'Wouldst have me swear to 't?'

'Oh, no! not for the world! do not so

profane yourself. Heaven knows you have sinned enough already to repent of.'

'How shall I convince thee?'

'Do not attempt it, Senor, for be assured it will avail nothing; it will be worse than useless.'

'How so?'

'Because to be frank—I do not love you.'

'Then shall I strive to teach thee how deserving I am of thy affections.'

'But I will not listen to your teachings.'

'Then must I compel thee!' replied the lieutenant, angry at the rebuff he had received. 'Remember, I am all-powerful here!'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Elvira, with a withering look of scorn and indignation; 'and as I have long supposed, villain enough to exercise any power you may have over the weak and defenceless. But, beware! lest a righteous retribution overwhelm you when least expected. The man who expects a reciprocity of love by force is beneath the brute, and is beyond all creatures that walk or crawl the earth the most to be dreaded and despised.'

Uttering this severe rebuke with an undaunted look, Elvira turned and hurried back to the *casa*, leaving the humbled wretch to reflect upon her words, and to meditate upon some scheme of villainy whereby he might obtain the Senorita's hand and her miserly father's wealth.

'By all the powers of hell, she shall be mine!' at length exclaimed the infuriated lieutenant to himself. 'I'm not so easily balked as this high-spirited damsel imagines. I have trusty followers—at least those who will obey my bidding for gold, however villainous—and three leagues hence only dwells Padre Garcelona, the pretended hermit money, with whom I will communicate this very night—he shall perform the marriage ceremony—he has learned already to do my bidding, the old miserly Jew—'

He was here interrupted by the approach of his newly appointed recruiting sergeant,

whose unscrupulous and desperate character he already knew.

'Ah, good Mateo,' resumed the lieutenant, assuming a complacent look; 'thou art ever prompt in performing thy duty.'

'Si, Senor,' replied the sergeant with a respectful air.

'And been poorly paid for thy services, hast not?'

'Verdadero, Senor.'

'I have work for thee, good Mateo, which will give thee gold.'

'Muchas gracias, Senor.'

'The Senorita Espindola must become the bride of Don Juliano Rosas.'

'Si, Senor,' said Mateo, without evincing any surprise, or even shrugging his shoulders.

'For the consummation of which she must be conveyed to the hermit's cell—old Padre Garcelona. You understand?'

'Si.'

'Enlist Roberto in the enterprise, and between you and him let some expedient be devised to seize upon her and convey her thither to-morrow night. I shall visit the Padre to-day, and have every thing arranged for our reception.'

'Si, Senor.'

'Remember, as you value thy life, and a good purse of gold to make life tolerable, communicate this to no one but Roberto, whom I will also confer with before I set out for the hermit's cell. I shall return by sunset, and as soon as it is dark go to yonder grove where I will meet thee to mature our mode of procedure. Remember, nothing must stand in the way that can mar the complete success of this enterprise. Should old Espindola be any obstacle, you wear a sharp *macheta*, and know well how to use it.'

Without making any reply, Mateo drew from his belt a long double-edged knife, and with a hellish grin signified to his master that his murderous weapon should not be wanting to carry into execution any scheme which he might propose.

The sergeant of few words, turned upon his heel, and hastened away in search of another assassin by the name of Roberto Val-doro, while Juliano went to his groom, ordered his fleetest steed, which he mounted, and rode away unattended.

It was nearly sunset, on the day following that on which the conversation just related occurred. Henry Allston and the fair Elvira were holding sweet converse together in the little apartment where they had enjoyed so many hours of bliss. On this day Elvira devoted more time to him than on the previous days, for the hours were now but few that they would commune together in that place. The night had arrived during which they were to be separated—perhaps an eternal separation!

The youth's wants had been so assiduously attended to by his lovely physician, that he had recovered his wonted health, and was as vigorous in mind and body as ever, although his confinement had worn away the brown shades which previous exposure beneath a torrid sun had imparted to his cheeks.

At the next midnight hour it was Allston's intention to set forth and rejoin his friends at Monterey, for he had heard of the victory achieved by his companions in arms, through Elvira, who had gained the information from two or three soldiers, who had deserted from Ampudia's retreating legions immediately after the capitulation. His honor, his duty, his allegiance to his country, thought Henry, demanded that he should report himself to his commander without delay, now that he was again restored to health and strength; but to leave the kind, the gentle, the beautiful creature, for whom his affections now equalled his unbounded gratitude, required the sacrifice of temporary bliss to his stern judgment.

We shall meet again, dearest Elvira, said the youth, as they sat beside each other with clasped hands, while tears, like dew-

drops upon the blushing rose, hung upon her beautiful cheeks. 'Dry up those tears and let us look calmly and resignedly upon this inevitable separation. If Heaven spares my life, and gives me liberty, I will again seek you out, though misfortune should drive you far away.'

'Heaven grant that the day of our reunion may not be far distant,' she answered, wiping away the tears as they sprung into her sparkling eyes. 'Believe me, Henry, it is not alone the thoughts of our separation, so near at hand, that makes my heart so sad, it is because of the perils which your brave spirit will incite you to encounter on the battle field.'

'Fear not, Elvira. That providential hand which has guided me safely through the worst dangers will be with me still. A long time may elapse before we meet again; and that joyous period I feel will surely come; but I tremble lest afterward we should again be separated.'

'Nay, Henry, think not of that. Say rather that this be our last meeting. I can bear this better than a future separation; for then I shall know that you have gone to a distant land—too far distant ever to return. Say, that you will not forsake me?'

'But, remember it will not be safe for me to remain with you here?'

'True, Henry; but whither you go I would follow, if you—'

'Ah, my Elvira!' exclaimed the youth, his countenance beaming with joy; 'you have answered that which I fain would have asked; then you will leave your country for mine?'

'Yes, gladly, Henry; for I have learned already to love your country. Its history I have studied, and even of the character of its people I had formed a tolerable idea before meeting with you and your comrades; and strange though it may appear, I have, since a child, had a heartfelt desire to see your country and its inhabitants. But, Henry,

any place would I fly to were I certain of your love and protection.' 'But your father, Elvira—will he consent?' 'I know not; and yet I sometimes think he cares less for Mexico than I do. When the proper time come, I am sure he will rejoice in his old age that his daughter has found a protector worthy to be loved and honored.'

'Ah, my beloved!' replied Allston, 'your words give me hope and happiness! I can now leave you with less regret! Oh, that Peace—lovely Peace—may soon smile over this unhappy land! then on the wings of love will I fly hither and claim thee for my bride!'

He had scarcely given vent to his enthusiastic impulses, when the voice of Senor Espindola was heard from below, calling loud for Elvira.

She ran towards the stair-case, and enquired of him his wishes.

'I heard a strange voice, just now, proceeding from thy apartment. With whom do you converse, my child?'

'With myself, father.'

'But I saw heard a voice as of a stranger.'

'That was true; I was trying to pronounce some English words in imitation of the invaders—thus—and Elvira proceeded to utter some sentences in as masculine a tone and as nearly like the prisoner's voice as in her power.'

'Ah, my little jester! thou'rt more than half Yankee now! I hope thou'lt not turn traitress! I shall lose both my gold and my neck if thou dost.'

'You cannot believe that a single-minded girl like me Elvira can possibly injure the Mexican cause?' asked the Senor.

'There's telling what one of my sex might do; thou'rt a shrewd one; an old head and a wise one on young shoulders.'

Ha, ha!—to thy vespers, girl, to thy vespers.'

'Yes, father;,' and Elvira breathed more freely as she heard his receding footsteps, approached her little altar to do his bidding; and there, also, to make confession of the deception she had used for the sake of him who had become dearer to her than all the world beside.

Once more did Elvira return to Henry—once more did they pledge their mutual love and constancy. The twilight hour had passed, and as but few hours would intervene when the loved one would take his departure, she left him to seek that repose which he required previous to setting out on his hazardous and wearisome journey.

Meanwhile, in a little grove not far distant from the casa, three creatures, wearing the semblance of humanity, were conspiring against the peace and happiness of that fair being, who thus far has occupied much space in our romantic history.

Don Juliano had visited the hermit's cell; with gold he had bribed him to perform a ceremony, which heaven nor earth could sanction. His coadjutors in crime had conceived and were prepared to carry into execution a scheme of villainy, which nothing save the torments of the infernal region could ever avenge.

'I predict a storm ere the midnight hour,' said Don Juliano, addressing his companions.

'So much the better for our enterprise,' replied the assassin, Roberto. 'I like not such work when even one star of heaven can look upon us. And if, perchance, any person should be abroad, we should not be obliged to defer or relinquish an enterprise which promises us so much gold. The only difficulty I apprehend is from old Espindola, of whom it is said he sleeps with one eye and one ear open.'

'Ah, but our good Mateo has signified

to me that he will be well provided for. Is it not so, Mateo?

'*Si, Senor!*' and he once more displayed his murderous macheta.

'Mateo is a man of few words, Roberto, as you have doubtless observed,' remarked Julianio; 'but he has a faculty of expressing more by a sign than most of us can by a score of words. But come, my friends, we must now separate. Two hours hence we

meet again in this very spot. Have every thing in readiness.'

'Never fear for Mateo and I,' said Roberto, when a well-filled purse of bright gold is to be our prize.'

Mateo grinned an approval of the remark and turned upon his heel.

Don Julianio now separated from his hired ruffians and returned to his quarters, where we shall leave him until we open a new chapter of stirring events.



CHAPTER XIII.

A Terrific Storm. Elvira's Visit to the Chamber of the Sleeping Youth. The Lightning's Flash, and the Discovery. Cause for Alarm. Allston is Awakened. The Assassins begin their Deadly Work. The Ladder and the Fatal Fall. Espindola receives a Mortal Wound. Summary Vengeance. Rage of Juliano. Elvira's Heroism. Allston comes to the Rescue. Death of the Assassins. Subsequent Events.



N HOUR before midnight, as Don Juliano had predicted, a storm arose. The stars which had been shining with undimmed resplendence during the evening, were now becoming obscured by thick black clouds which arose suddenly from behind the Sierra Madre, and as they spread their black wings towards the zenith of the starry canopy, flashes of lightning darted across the heavens, and the rolling of thunder was louder and louder at each successive report; and now violent gusts of wind came sweeping across the plain, and big drops of rain began to patter heavily against the casement. Anon, the combined elements were in furious commotion—the rain poured in torrents—the lightnings flashed vividly—and heaven's artillery rumbled and roared with fearful power. At one moment the whole scene would be lighted up as if but one complete mass of lurid flame—in the next pitchy darkness, so impenetrable that the outlines of the nearest and most prominent objects were entirely undiscernible to the eye.

As may well be supposed, Donna Elvira had not yet closed her eyes in sleep; not

because of the howlings of the storm, nor the terrific flashes of light, but because her whole thoughts were engrossed by him, who, alas, was so soon to bid her farewell! As the elements raged in all their violence, she could but secretly rejoice; for the youthful officer, she reasoned within herself, would not think of venturing abroad on such a perilous night as that, and she should be blessed with his society for another day!

She arose from her couch, on which she had reclined without disrobing herself, and after lighting a taper, went to the door of Allston's apartment and rapped lightly upon it. She waited awhile and repeated the summons. Still no answer. She then opened the door with as little noise as possible and entered the apartment, and approached his bedside. He was in a sleep so quiet that she resolved not to disturb him until the storm should abate. She looked from the casement and endeavored to penetrate with her gaze the opaque gloom without. Not an object was visible, when the vivid lightning's flash for a moment illumined the scene. She was not certain, but fancied that she saw the forms of three men, standing beneath the shelter of a large tree which stood some twenty rods distance from the

house. She awaited until another flash, when a more distinct view of them was had. This circumstance would have passed her mind as an ordinary occurrence notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, were they not exposed to the violence of the wind and rain, but also to the lightning's deadly stroke. Obscuring the lighted taper by a shade, so that she might not herself be seen, she again approached the window, determining to satisfy herself as to their being what they appeared, and if so, to ascertain for what purpose they were there at such an hour and in such an unclement storm. The scene was again illumined, and she once more distinctly discerned them at a shorter distance from the house than before, and likewise, near by them stood four horses, saddled and bridled. This added to her curiosity, and rendered the mystery still more mysterious; but that they were engaged in some villainous enterprise, she did not doubt. Once more she was enabled to catch a momentary glimpse of their proceedings, when she saw that one of the trio bore upon his left shoulder an *escala real*, (accommodation ladder,) and that all of them were approaching the house. Their footsteps, although light, were now heard, and placing her ear close to the casement the noise made by placing the ladder against the house was easily distinguished.

Elvira was greatly alarmed, for her first impression was, that they had by means unaccountable, discovered her great secret in regard to the American officer; and that they chose these means to get him into their clutches and bear him away or murder him on the spot. Notwithstanding her fears the noble girl did not entirely lose her self-possession, but she trembled to think of the consequences which a short space of time would have brought about, had she not, by the merest chance discovered some of their movements. She summoned up all the courage which often before had aided her. She had been schooled in dangers, and she knew

that she had power to act with tolerable coolness in cases of great emergency.

She immediately ran to the couch of Allston, awoke him from a quiet repose, and hastily imparted to him the strange circumstance, and the perils which would soon encompass him. Fortunately he was ready attired with the exception of his military coat which he quickly threw on. He examined his revolvers and found each barrel charged and in good order; and, thus armed, he resolved to sell his life dearly, rather than to fall into the hands of an enemy!

He extinguished the taper, and entreated Elvira to leave his apartment, and not to expose herself to the threatened danger.—With reluctance she did as he besought her, and she retired into her own room, but seizing a glittering poignard and a pair of pistols from an adjoining closet, she took a position but a pace beyond the threshold which divided her from her lover, resolving not only to use the weapons in his defence, but if he fell, to strike the steel to her own heart!

The storm now raged with less violence; the lightning flashed not so frequently nor so vivid, yet the darkness was as impenetrable as before. Allston, after having masked his features, at Elvira's suggestion, approached the casement and listened, but no noise could he hear except the rustling of the leaves and the pattering of the rain. With a slow and cautious movement he pushed aside the casement, and again listening he was enabled to hear hoarse whisperings from below, but understood naught of that upon which they were conversing. Presently he heard one of the conspirators place his foot upon the ladder and commence ascending. The decisive moment had arrived. Should he fire upon the miscreant?—this, thought he, would alarm the half score of Rancheros, whom he knew occupied the guard-house; and he was not certain that these men belonged to the band who usually quartered there. However, he had little time for reflection; for the man had already ascended.

more than half way up the ladder which reached nearly up to the casement where he looked. A half minute more and the burglar would arrive at the top! A bold expedient suddenly flashed upon Allston's mind. He leaned over upon his breast and his hand grasped the top of the ladder—one powerful effort and he hurled both ladder and man to the earth! the latter falling so that his head came in contact with the stone steps! a few groans only escaping him and Roberto was a corpse!

His comrades thinking his death the result of an accident, for it was yet too dark to distinguish any one even at the shortest distance, began again to raise up the ladder for a second trial, when a dim flash of lightning for an instant revealed to Julianio the figure of a strange looking individual standing in the casement above!

The cause of the ladder's falling was no longer a mystery to the mind of the unscrupulous leader in this diabolical enterprise—and horrid oaths and revengeful maledictions upon the head of Senor Espindola, fell from his lips in subdued, but harsh and rugged tones.

He ordered Mateo to run to the guard-house and quickly summons all his men for the purpose of wreaking summary vengeance upon the supposed author of his comrade's death. He fired one of his pistols towards the casement, but the ball did no other damage than to shiver a pane of glass; his would-be victim having readily apprehended danger from this source, and had wisely retreated a few paces. The report of the pistol aroused Espindola from his repose, and hurried the movements of the Rancheros. The old man, to learn the cause of this midnight disturbance, soon afterward appeared at the door bearing a torch-light in his hand. Simultaneously appeared some half dozen men, whom Mateo had aroused from their slumbers; and on Espindola's demanding the meaning of this disturbance, Don Juli-

ano exclaimed to his comrades, and at the same time pointing towards the door:

'There stands the hoary-headed villain, who has killed your comrade, Roberto!—Avenge, men, his cruel death!'

'What means——'

The unfortunate Espindola had no time to finish his inquiry, for one of the Rancheros rushed suddenly towards him and buried his macheta in his body, and the old man fell bleeding across the threshold of the door! But this cruel act was most summarily avenged, for the vile assassin fell almost instantly afterwards by a pistol shot fired from the casement above!

'Treason! treason!' cried Don Julianio, as the pistol's flash enabled him to catch another glimpse of the masked figure above. 'There are other foes within! This old wretch,' continued he, pointing to the bleeding body of Espindola, 'hath betrayed us! Let not one escape alive, except his daughter!'

Two or three Indian domestics, who lodged in a small tenement in the rear of the main building, hearing the disturbance, rushed forth to learn the cause. Julianio, without ascertaining whether they were friends or enemies, ordered his men to put them to death! They were accordingly despatched without mercy! they had no means of defence, having rushed into peril without knowing the why or wherefore.

Don Julianio, leaving three of his men outside, to prevent any one escaping from the casement, ordered the others to follow him into the house, for the purpose of seizing upon Elvira, and cutting off any egress attempted by whoever might be within.

With the torch of Espindola in his hand, which he seized as he passed the body, he entered the house, and resolutely rushed up stairs, followed by his comrades! They examined each apartment as they proceeded along, but encountered no foe until they entered the apartment of Elvira, who was

standing at the opposite door, guarding, as it were, the chamber which held the real object of their vengeance!

With an unterrified look and air, which seemed to indicate that not one of the villains could approach her with safety, she held her position for some moments, awaiting their movements.

At length Don Juliano, who at first felt somewhat awed upon meeting from her keen eye a gaze of defiance, summoned up his courage, and exclaimed to his men:

'Seize her! She's a vile traitress! but spare her life!'

'Approach me not, villains!' she said in firm and meaning tones. 'The first who dares will fall by my hand!'

No one stirred, for each one felt that the threat would be put into execution.

'Are ye cowards, my men!' cried Don Juliano. 'Does the threat of a weak girl unman ye? Seize her, I say!'

'Again I repeat, approach me not!' said Elvira, still undaunted. 'Death will be the first man's——'

But they interrupted her warning voice, and two of the wretches, with naked machetas in their hands sprang towards her. She levelled a pistol and instantly fired! One of them staggered a few paces back and fell a lifeless corpse! The other, frightened, attempted to rush out of the room, but Juliano, maddened at his cowardice, struck him a blow upon his head with the butt of a heavy pistol which levelled him to the floor in a senseless condition.

Meanwhile these events were going on within, Allston having shot down two of the desperadoes who remained without, the other with affright turned upon his heel and fled with all his speed towards the forest. Hearing the pistol report in the adjoining room, he ran to assist Donna Elvira; but to his surprise and sorrow, he found that she had taken the precaution to fasten the door!—He went to the casement, and finding that

the ladder had not been removed, he took advantage of it and quickly descended to the ground! His only thought now being in regard to the safety of Elvira, he sought the door of the house and entered; but having no light to guide his steps, and being unacquainted with the arrangement of the house, he groped his way along as well as he could solely by aid of the confused sounds that reached his ear from above. At length he found the stair case, which he quickly ascended, and groping his way through several rooms, he at length caught sight of the glimmer of a light through the key-hole of the door which he supposed was the entrance to Elvira's. Hearing a scream he rushed forward, burst open the door, and beheld his loved protectress struggling in the hands of the two remaining villains! He dared not fire, lest his shot might strike Elvira, for his arm was unnerved at the spectacle! but dashing his revolver to the floor, he sprang forward, and seizing one of the wretches by the throat, he quickly caused him to let go his grasp upon the struggling girl. The other, without turning to the assistance of his comrade still clung to Elvira, and raising her in his arms, attempted to bear her from the room; but her right arm being now freed, she snatched a poniard from her belt, and buried it in the villain's breast ere he could arrest the deadly blow, and Don Juliano, fell, gaspingly, at her feet! In another moment, Elvira, fainting from exhaustion, and from the sight of such a bloody spectacle, fell almost senseless into the arms of her lover! Laying her upon the couch he seized a pitcher of water and dashing portions of it into her face, at intervals, he soon had the satisfaction of seeing her eyes again unclosed, and hearing the tones of her sweet voice!

Not knowing whether the danger was yet over or not, Allston took the blazing torch, and went below for the purpose of ascertaining if any of the foe were yet lurking about the premises. All was as quiet with-

out as before the attack. The storm, too, had passed, and the starry heavens appeared more bright and beautiful than before the raging of the elements. The three assassins whom he had shot from the casement were lying stiff and cold upon the ground! He re-entered the dwelling, when his eye fell upon the haggard features and bleeding form of Espindola. After barricading the door, he lifted the inanimate body in his arms and bore it to the room where the old man usually slept. On examination he found that he was yet alive, but dangerously wounded, whether mortally or not he was incapable of judging. Staunching the macheta wound as well as he could, he hastened up stairs to inform Elvira of her father's dangerous situation. She had recovered from her faintness, and he led her down to look upon a scene more grievous than any she had yet beheld! She wept bitterly over the prostrate form of him who had been her guide and sole protector from infancy. But he was yet alive, and the hope that he might recover incited her to action. Wiping away the tears of sorrow, she commenced dressing the ghastly wound from which the blood had now ceased oozing; this accomplished she bathed his brow with cooling water, and with Allston's aid she propped up his head with pillows. These little attentions began to revive him, and ere long he had sufficiently recovered his consciousness to be aware of his condition. Allston, on perceiving that his senses were being restored to him, retired to another apartment, deeming that his presence might disturb the wounded man.

'How is it with you, father?' enquired Elvira, while tears again dropped from her eyes.

'Weep not, my child,' replied he, feebly; 'I am but an old man—I knew my term of life had well-nigh expired—I thought, too, that I should die by an assassin, who would do the deed for gold—but, thank Heaven it was beyond their reach!'

'Ah! my father!' asked Elvira, who was the miscreant who could so cruelly raise his hand against you.'

'Twas done at the instigation of the merciless Don Julianio.'

'Ah! then have you been fearfully avenged! The inhuman monster, and his vile confederates have all been killed! With my own hand I struck the poignard to his heart, where it yet remains buried!'

'My noble, my brave-hearted girl!' cried the old man, exultingly. 'I now can die contented; that reptile has been the bane of my existence, and the only being in shape of humanity, on God's footstool, that I feared! He had gained an undue power over me, concerning which thou wilt hereafter learn! Yes, I can now die happy—but ere——'

'Oh, talk not of dying!' exclaimed Elvira, in tones of anguish. 'Now that the monster whom you feared is dead, talk of many days of happiness yet to come!'

'No, my child, the wound is a mortal one. Already do I feel the clammy hand of death upon me—but, I die happy—thou'rt well provided for—all my estate is thine—and a goodly sum is there of gold! Ah! I had almost forgot—go, my child, to the escrutoire and take from it a large key—it unlocks the iron chest, in which thou wilt find a very small trunk—bring the trunk to me.'

Elvira followed his directions, and placed it before him. He felt for a spring but was too feeble to press it down.

'Take it Elvira,' he continued; 'it opens by a spring in this corner—press it hard with thy thumb and the lid will fly open.'

Elvira tried the spring and the lid flew open with a slight pressure.

'Ah, that is right!' he resumed, and taking therefrom a sealed packet of papers.—'When I am gone, my child, thou wilt break this seal—beneath it lies a key to all my wealth—and there are few men, although I say it, in all Mexico, who can boast of so much wealth as the contents of this packet

will reveal to thee—it is all thine, Elvira.— There is likewise within another sealed document, which must not be opened until thou hast attained the age of twenty. When the alcalde of the village hears of my death, he will come hither to dispose of my body—place entire confidence in him, and obey his will—for I have, in anticipation of my near approach to the grave, already conferred with him—he will be thy protector for a time, during which my wishes for thy future welfare will be made known to thee. Guard these papers with all thy caution—trust them not beyond thy reach—once lost and all thy prospects will be clouded.’

As he uttered these last words his head fell back upon the pillow, and for some moments he could not speak.

Allston, thinking that his last moments had come, cautiously approached the bedside. The dying man, for some moments, seemed to have lost his sight, for his eyes stared vacantly about the room. At length they became fixed upon the youth who stood by Elvira, and he started up.

‘Ah! who’s that, Elvira?’ he enquired, gaspingly.

‘He is our friend and protector, father,’ answered Elvira. ‘His timely efforts saved me from being dragged away and perhaps from being murdered by the assassin.’

‘But his looks are——’

‘True, father, he is an American,’ said Elvira, anticipating what he would say, and which Espindola’s weakness cut short.

Recovering a little strength, he asked,

‘Said’st thou he saved thy life, Elvira?’

‘I did, father. The ruffians had me already within their grasp, when he rushed to my assistance.’

‘Then God bless thee, stranger—I am no enemy of thine or thy people—see that no harm—befall—this dear girl—Elvira, farewell—I cannot live—I die—Heaven bless thee—oh——’

A few groans succeeded these incoherent

sentences, and the murdered old man breathed his last!

For some time the youthful pair stood beside that couch of death, the tears gushing from the eyes of both. Elvira wept that she had lost her aged protector—Henry wept in sympathy for the afflicted.

Bright morning soon dawned. The only servant who had escaped the assassin’s knife was despatched to the village for the worthy Alcalde, of whom Espindola, in his last hour, had spoken. This important functionary, with due despatch, arrived with his secretary, and a holy father of the church. The solemn rites due to the deceased were performed without unnecessary delay, and Espindola’s remains were deposited in the tomb which he had prepared with his own hands.

A deep grave was dug for the murderers, into which they were thrown and buried unblest by any rite of the church.

The Alcalde having performed the secular affairs of the deceased, devolving upon him, not only by his office but by Espindola’s commission, took Elvira under his benevolent protection, and conveyed her to his home, whither Allston accompanied them.

On the next morning the lovers bade each other an affectionate farewell, and our adventurous and heroic young American, mounted upon an inferior horse that he had purchased at the village, sat out, unattended, for the city of Monterey, at which place he arrived safely after a slow and tedious ride of three hours.

Unfortunately, he was too late to rejoin his company there, the Dragoon corps having previously sat out for Saltillo. However, he ascertained, on application to headquarters, that a brigade of Infantry would take up their line of march in the same direction on the succeeding day, and it was expected that the brigade would overtake the advance at a small town called St. Hidalgo,

where most of the forces it was supposed would concentrate. He availed himself of this opportunity, and on the next day was pushing forward with the infantry, impatient to see his friends, and allay their anxiety in regard to his fate.

We must now pass over a period of several weeks, to that day on which the bloodiest of all the battles of Mexico was fought; a contest which not only the American people but all the nations of Europe look upon with wonder!

CHAPTER XIV.



The moment in which the horse reared up, the infantry, which was in the rear, began to move forward. The horse, however, did not stop, but continued to rear up, its head reaching towards the sky. The infantry, seeing this, began to cheer and shout, and the horse, hearing their voices, reared up still higher. The scene was one of great excitement and confusion. The horse, in its effort to reach the top of the hill, had thrown off its rider, and was now rearing up alone. The infantry, seeing this, began to move forward, and the horse, hearing their voices, reared up still higher. The scene was one of great excitement and confusion. The horse, in its effort to reach the top of the hill, had thrown off its rider, and was now rearing up alone. The infantry, seeing this, began to move forward, and the horse, hearing their voices, reared up still higher. The scene was one of great excitement and confusion.

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CHAPTER XIV:

Battle of Buena Vista. Heroic Conduct of the Light Dragoons. A Single-handed Contest between Captain Clifton and a Colonel of Lancers. Defeat of the Latter. The Wild California Charger. A Night Scene on the Field of Battle. Romano Falcon and his Prisoners. The Strange Youth. Singular Denouement.



BUENA VISTA! What thrilling emotions move the heart of every patriotic American at the mere mention of the locale of the most remarkable conflict of modern times? Remarkable not only on account of the disparity of numbers of the American forces when compared with the Mexican legions, but on account of the former being made up almost entirely of raw, undisciplined recruits, many of which had only 'heard of battles,' while the vanquished army was composed of the flower of Mexico's most experienced soldiery, and led, too, by their great chieftain, Santa Anna.

But, without digressing, or going over the details of that hard contested battle, which are 'familiar as household words' to almost every American, we will only write of a few incidents, in which several of our characters performed almost 'prodigies of valor.'

The grand manœuvre of Santa Anna, by which he was to gain a decisive victory over the Americans, was, now that his every other

effort had failed, on the point of being carried into execution. This was nothing less than to outflank the left of the enemy's line and gain his rear. Immense masses of the Mexican Cavalry and Infantry began to ascend the heights, preparatory to the overwhelming charge which was to be made against the thin ranks upon the field below. The mountain's side literally glistened with bristling bayonets and lances. Several batteries, stationed to support the charge, now began pouring a shower of grape and canister upon the infantry within reach with such deadly effect, that one regiment was forced to fly from the field. Simultaneously the cavalry and infantry, which had gained the heights, charged with almost resistless fury upon the left of their enemy's line, but they were held in check by the well directed fires of the several batteries which were now opened upon them, and the infantry and the greater portion of the cavalry were forced to retreat while destruction was dealt among them.

The left of the American line, notwith-

standing the failure of the charge, was turned, and a formidable squadron of lancers, gained the rear, and had already commenced harrassing our brave troops. It was at this critical juncture that the regiment of Light Dragoons, held in reserve under command of Colonel Granville, charged upon this vastly superior body of lancers. The latter resisted the shock so spiritedly that for a time the contest seemed doubtful, notwithstanding the dreadful havoc made in the ranks of the Mexicans. At length the Dragoons obtained the mastery, and would have annihilated them, had it not been for the well known trick of Santa Anna—an act which must ever disgrace him—in displaying the white flag for no other purpose than to give the discomfited cavalry an opportunity to gain the main body; and, at the same time, allowing a portion of his forces to continue their fire upon the Americans!

The moment the treachery was discovered the Dragoons pursued their enemy and dashed in among them as they retreated. The Mexicans suddenly turned and the contest again became desperate and bloody. Clifton's company was foremost in this fight, and his hardy followers, with sabres and revolvers, did terrible execution.

In this sanguinary *melee*, our hero engaged, single-handed, with a Mexican officer, who was mounted upon a high-spirited and noble-looking California charger. He came towards our hero at full gallop, with lance poised, and aimed a blow at his head, but Clifton's horse rearing at the moment, the lance penetrated the animal's breast, and with the rider fell to the earth—the lance of the Mexican snapping in twain at the same moment! Clifton instantly springing to his feet, seized the Mexican's charger by the bridle with his left hand, while with the right he struck his antagonist a blow with his sabre which caused him to reel in the saddle, and finally to fall to the earth!

During this single combat the Dragoons had pressed upon the Mexicans so severely,

that they had advanced many rods ere he had completed his single-handed victory; and he found himself alone, still grasping the wild charger of his defeated antagonist by the bridle! It required more than his strength to hold the furious animal in check long enough to enable him to vault into the saddle!

To his amazement he now saw a number of the enemy flying towards him, and in another minute, unless he could save himself by almost a miracle, he saw that he must fall into their hands! With almost superhuman strength he brought the fiery charger to his haunches—leaped into the saddle—and in another moment he was borne over the plain with the speed of the wind! At length with his utmost efforts he gained the mastery over the almost untamable but noble looking animal, and rejoined the Dragoons, whose victory over the enemy was complete! No trophy from that battle field was prized more highly than the California charger.—Clifton learned subsequently that the officer whom he left dead upon the field, was a Colonel of Lancers, and was esteemed as one of the most valiant and gallant spirits of the Mexican army. The horse was a favorite, and no man but himself had ever dared to mount him until our hero backed him upon the field of Buena Vista.

The battle no longer raged. The last rays of the setting sun which fell upon that blood-stained field, also shone upon the Star Spangled Banner, as it waved over that plateau on which the old hero had stood amid the iron sleet, giving his orders with the utmost coolness, even when shouts of victory were almost upon the lips of the enemy's legions. The latter of whom were now fleeing in the greatest disorder beyond the reach of our victorious troops, leaving the plain, the roads and gullies strewed with their slain and wounded.

We shall pass over the horrible details which characterized that night upon the

blood field of Buena Vista. The groans from the dying and suffering were heard on all sides. Every relief which the victors could afford to both friends and enemies among the suffering, was freely given; but the relief was inadequate to the hundreds to whom it would have been a blessing.

Among the Americans, even those who escaped without a wound, many fell down absolutely exhausted with the fatigues of that dreadful day's work.

There was one spot, in particular, an elevated plain, on which a battery had been served, where great numbers of the killed and wounded, of both armies, were lying promiscuously together. Upon this battery, with an overwhelming force, had the Mexican cavalry charged. It had a brave band to defend it, and the slaughter was dreadful; but the number of its defenders was so insignificant that they were obliged to yield, and this battery fell into the Mexican's hands, and was the only trophy they had to boast of in that day's fight. But dearly did they pay for it, and they were compelled to drag the pieces of cannon over the dead bodies of their own companions in order to get them away.

Among this promiscuous mass of dead and wounded, there lay a young man, who, from his richly embroidered uniform, might easily have been recognized as a Mexican cavalry officer. His dead horse lay beside him, and also his weapons.

'Dios de Cielo!' he exclaimed in agony; 'will no one come to my aid?'

'Did any jittleman spake?' enquired a son of the Emerald Isle, who laid within a yard of the wounded officer.

'A hundred pieces of gold to any one who will assist me to gain comfortable quarters,' said the Mexican in tolerably good English, in answer to the Irishman.

'Och! by Saint Patrick, I'd take the job for half the mooney, had I ony now the use of my legs. I've aither the goot or a mighty big pace of cold metal in both of my trothers, so bedad, I'm worse nor a blind hoss.'

There was a silence of words for a minute or two, when Pat McCrickey—for he it was—again renewed the conversation.

'Did nobody spake—if nobody did spake let him be aither sayin' it over agin. I like to be social whin a body is in disthressin' carcumstances.'

The Mexican officer groaned.

'Och, be Jabers! I don't onderstand that any how! Now if my legs were ony whole would'nt I make thracks out o'this. I'll make a bit of an examination and appraise damiges,' continued Pat, raising himself up.—'Now, by the hooly Powers! and indade it's nothin' but a poor dead and gone horse that's wounded poor Pat's legs aither all!'

Pat with considerable effort released his nether limbs from the uncomfortable burthen and again resumed:

'Now, Misthur Mexikin, jist be aither repateing that nice bit iv a profitthable job.—Och! by the powers! there's a cythroat looking divil coming. I'll be dead a bit ony how, jist to see whether yer errand be not a divil's one. Bedad now, I know it is,' continued Pat, as he saw a savage looking Mexican prowling about the dead and wounded, and rifling each one that gave prospect of booty. 'Be asy, Pat—be asy.'

The Irishman assumed silence and he watched the progress of this Mexican robber of the dead, and at length saw him approach the wounded officer. The moment the wretch discovered his countryman he seemed to recognize him, and as he stooped over his body he uttered a fiendish laugh of exultation, and began to pilfer his watch, chain, and other ornaments. The officer for a moment seemed to recover, when the robber unsheathed a murderous looking knife, and in another moment it would have been plunged into the officer's heart, had not Pat, who narrowly watched his movements, started up, and discharged a pistol at the head of the unmerciful monster. The ball took effect, shattered his brains, and he fell a corpse upon the field.

The young Mexican officer was now aroused from the lethargy into which he had fallen.

'Och, bedad, sir!' exclaimed Pat; 'one minute more and you 'd have gone to glory shure. 'I've fixed his flint for him—the devil's own has carried his oogly sowl 'long with him into Puggatory 'fore this; and in my way o' thinkin' devil a bit beyant will it iver git.'

'Who are you speaking of?' enquired the Mexican.

'Who? why that murderin' spalpeen 'long side iv ye. I'll hoist ye oop a bit and ye may see his oogly countenance,' answered Pat, raising the young man to a sitting posture. 'There now did ye iver see the likes iv sich a villain?'

'Santa Madre!' exclaimed the young man, gazing upon the robber's face. 'You have killed Canales!'

'All's the better loock for ye,' returned Pat, 'for the devil wud have done the same thing for ye, and Pathrick McCrickey wud ha' lost the bit iv a job yer 'onor wud be afther have him do.'

'Can you convey me to a place of safety?' asked the officer; 'I am wounded and shall die unless relieved—a hundred pieces of gold shall be thy reward.'

'How big paces, yer 'onor?'

'Doubloons!'

'Bedad, then, Pat McCrickey's yer man. Now be asy whilst I get ye well moonted on behind; and I'll bear ye 'long as asy as a mither wud her darlint swate babby. But wait a bit while I borry the loan iv a few iv this copes valerbles—he'll have no use for them in Puggatory, yer 'onor.'

The Irishman quickly disencumbered the dead body of Canales of sundry watches, a quantity of gold coin and jewels, besides several costly pocket weapons. This being accomplished he managed to mount the wounded young man upon his back, and began trudging his way towards the camp of the American victors. After half an hour's se-

vere toil Pat succeeded in reaching the tent of Captain Clifton with the young Mexican upon his shoulders.

'Ere's a nice bit iv a job, yer 'onor for one o' the dooctors,' said Pat, addressing Clifton, and at the same time carefully relieving himself of his burthen. 'It's ben a mighty tadioos one for Pat McCrickey, ony how.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Clifton, recognizing in the Mexican one he had before seen; 'this is the brave youth whom I encountered single-handed on the field to-day. Gladly would I have spared him that blow, had it been possible otherwise to have saved myself.—He shall have the same attention as our own wounded; and, Patrick, you shall be amply rewarded for placing him under my protection.'

'Och, bedad, yer 'onor; the jintleman's promised to do that same jinerous thing for himself.'

'Well, Patrick, go to the surgeon's tent, and if there's a surgeon that can possibly be spared, even for a few minutes, summon him to my tent.'

'Yes, yer 'onor,' said the Irishman, making a sudden exit.

One of the surgeons soon made his appearance, and on examining and dressing the wound pronounced it not mortal. By kind attention he was soon rendered comfortable, and from him Clifton learned that he had formerly been a colonel in the Mexican army, but had, within a short period, joined Romano Falcon's band of Independents and was his second in command; and that the whole corps had joined the army of Santa Anna, just before that general's great demonstration upon the American lines.

On the following day an exchange of prisoners between the armies was agreed upon; yet Santa Anna declined receiving the guerrilla lieutenant for an officer of equal rank, and the young Mexican yet continued to share in the hospitalities of Captain Clifton's quarters.

In a day or two afterwards a monk was announced at the tent, who desired to see the wounded prisoner. He was immediately admitted, and Clifton once more beheld Romano Falcon, disguised as on his former sudden appearance before Colonel Granville at Monterey. He now appeared much more humble than on that occasion, and offered to exchange all the American prisoners for his wounded lieutenant. Before, however, the arrangement could be concluded, what was the surprise of the Guerilla Chieftain as well as Captain Clifton, to behold, marching into their presence, the long last party of reconnaissance, with Lt. Zeke Short at their head, and also followed by a meek but handsome featured youth, attired in an ill-fitting but rich Mexican costume.

'What is the meaning of this?' ejaculated Clifton, delighted again to meet his companions. 'Are these the prisoners you would exchange?' he asked, turning to the astonished guerilla.

'I'm all amazement!' exclaimed Romano Falcon. 'An hour since they were well secured and guarded at our mountain rendezvous!'

'And would have been there now, had it not been for this brave youth,' replied Zeke, introducing the timid looking boy; 'I told him my captain would reward him for this service.'

'Your promise, lieutenant, shall be duly attended to,' replied Clifton, while he regarded the boy with an eye of peculiar interest, and marked with admiration a profusion of luxuriant curls which hung over his shoulders.

The youth seemed to shrink from his gaze, and with a downcast expression of countenance was about to turn away; but Clifton's attention, at this moment, was arrested by the sudden entrance of Colonel Granville, who looked the very personification of despair. Without regarding the collection of persons within the tent, he wildly exclaimed—

'For Heaven's sake, Clifton, tell me, have you seen anything of my daughter?'

'Not since sunset, last evening!' he answered.

'Then she is lost!' continued the veteran. 'She has not been seen around my quarters since retiring last night!'


'Can it be possible! Then, indeed, have you much cause for alarm!' said Clifton, with as much apparent concern as the bereaved parent. 'Rosalia gone? Then will I go in search of her—nor will I rest until she be restored to your arms, living or dead!'

'Don't put yourselves to any unnecessary trouble,' said the supposed Mexican boy, taking off his cap, and discovering to Granville's and Clifton's astonishment the fair Rosalia herself. She rushed into her father's arms, and begged his pardon for the alarm she had caused him.

'I will explain to yourself and Captain Clifton,' said she, 'my adventures since last night after this business is disposed of. My motive you have before you, which I trust may be deemed a sufficient palliation for my appearing before you in a garb which I know ill becomes one of my sex.'

CHAPTER XV.

Rosalia relates her Wonderful Expedition to the Mountain Rendezvous of Romano Falcon and his Band of Guerillas. The Return of the Dragoons to Monterey. Visit to the Alcalde and Elvira Espindola.

OME, ROSA,' said Colonel Granville, a day or two after the singular *denouement* just related, as they sat in an apartment of a low stone house, in Saltillo, which the veteran occupied as his quarters; 'come, tell us of your strange adventure to the mountain rendezvous of Romano Falcon. Captain Clifton, I doubt not, will be quite as much edified by it as I shall be myself.'

'True, colonel, I am quite impatient to hear it,' replied Clifton, who had but a few moments before joined his friends. 'I cannot conceive under what circumstances a lady could be induced to hazard herself on an enterprise to a robber's cave.'

'You must not infer, Mr. Clifton, that because there are some cowards even among the sterner sex that all ladies must necessarily be cowards, too,' said Rosalia, tartly; 'but my adventure, I assure you, is neither so remarkable nor romantic as you appear to

imagine; and as I have given a promise to relate it to you I will keep my word. The circumstances, which I will briefly describe, are these:—

"On the night of the 23d, after you had returned from the battle field, I was seated at a late hour in my chamber, and looking forth from the casement, I saw a female figure glide out of the house opposite, and come directly across the street, and finally stood directly beneath my window. Watching her movements I saw that she held a letter in her hand, which, from her gestures, I was aware that it was intended for me. To a piece of thread which I lowered from the window she attached the letter and it was quickly in my possession. I broke the seal, and by a taper light, I read as follows:

'If the Senorita Granville, whom I have had the pleasure of seeing from the casa opposite, has courage and a will to free thirteen American captives from the dungeon of an Outlaw, she will, within an hour, re-

pair to the house opposite, where she will meet with one of her own sex ready and willing to aid her. (Signed)

BEATRIZ.

'Impelled partly by curiosity and partly by a desire to aid the unfortunate captives if within my power, and after duly considering how I ought to act, I left my chamber, issued from the house as noiselessly as possible, and flew across the street, when I met the strange female at the door ready to receive me. She conducted me to a richly furnished apartment, where I was enabled to note her appearance. She took me by the hand, and seated herself on a sofa beside me, when she threw off her veil, and disclosed to my gaze the most brilliant countenance I ever looked upon: and, although she appeared to be at least thirty-five years old, she was, nevertheless, surpassingly handsome. From the earnestness of her manners, and the apparent sincerity of every word that she uttered, I became satisfied that she had no sinister motive in enticing me from my chamber, although it was past the midnight hour.

'I have not time to explain to you the motives of my singular conduct,' remarked this lady to me as soon as we were seated; 'but in order that you may surmise the truth I will make known to you the fact that I am the discarded wife of Romano Falcon. Furthermore that I have recently been foully wronged by him; and by way of revenging myself I have taken an oath to annoy him by every means in my power. I know of thirteen American prisoners who are confined in a dungeon of his cavernous castle in the mountain; and I can conceive of no one thing which he would feel more keenly than the escape of these prisoners, whom he is resolved shall remain imprisoned until they are ransomed by a large sum of money. If you have courage, lady, and will but follow my directions, before to-morrow's sun shall climb above yon mountain peak those captives shall be freed from the power of the Guerilla Chieftain.

'But why,' asked I, 'do you not undertake to liberate them yourself?'

'That is impossible!' she replied. 'I have been banished from his mountain home, under the penalty of death if ever I should attempt to pass his guard. Even the sentinels have orders to shoot me, should I re-appear there.'

After assuring me that the dangers to be encountered were insignificant, if I but followed her instructions, I consented to engage in the enterprise.

'I have a son of fifteen years of age,' she continued, who has been absent for one year at school, and is daily expected at his father's rendezvous. It seemed to me, on observing you yesterday at the casement opposite, that you slightly resembled him, and thinking that if I could but gain your consent to be disguised in a suit of my boy's clothes, which I happen to have in my possession, you might easily gain access to the cavern, as Romano Falcon's son, without being suspected by the sentinels.'

'But the father will surely discover the deception,' I suggested.

'That is the least of the obstacles, for I propose that you should appear at the cave at an hour when he and a portion of his band will be absent; for it is Romano Falcon's invariable practice to leave his quarters at sunrise with most of his followers, and to remain abroad in search of adventures for two or three hours, when they return to enjoy their morning repast. As soon as it is day-break, I propose to set out with you on easy pacers, which I have already provided, and after riding about a league's distance, we shall arrive at a point, where we can secrete ourselves, and from it discern Falcon and his followers when they set out on their morning excursion.'

Without explaining any further here, she produced the boy's apparel, of which she had spoken, and assisted to metamorphose me from a Yankee lass into a Mexican boy, and when the transformation was complete,

she complimented me for making so excellent a counterfeit of her son. I may as well state, however, that the desired effect was not produced until a shade or two of a brown color was added to my face by some substance which she had already prepared.

As soon as the first streak of dawn was visible, we mounted the horses which a mestizzo led to the door, and galloped off in the pure morning atmosphere for the mountain, and had climbed nearly half way up its steep path before the eastern horizon was tinted with the first beams of the rising sun. Approaching a little farther towards its summit, we turned off into a thick grove of trees, and emerged into an open plateau, where we were enabled to overlook not only the entrance of the guerillas cave but also portions of the path we had just ascended. Dismounting we led our horses into the grove and awaited for the time of action.—The sun's rays had no sooner lit up the peaks of the mountain, when we saw a troop of horse quickly assemble on the little plain, and in a short time they galloped down the mountain's side, and the clatter of horse's hoofs was soon beyond our hearing.

'It is as well as I could wish,' said this strange lady, at length; 'he has gone, and from the number that has followed him I should judge that there could not be half a score remaining at his rendezvous. Now is the time for action—be bold and resolute, and you will soon have done your country a great service. You will now place these pistols in your belt, and ride boldly up the mountain path, and when you have reached a cross standing on the left of the path-way you will be challenged by a sentinel for the pass word—give '*Independencia*.' When you have arrived at the cave's mouth you will again be challenged—answer '*Amigo*.' Immediately dismount, throw the rein over an iron post, and enter the cavern with the same confidence as if you had often been there. After proceeding a few rods, you will perceive a narrow passage turning to the right.

Follow its direction until you arrive at an iron door, which you will find bolted and barred. Should you encounter any one within the cave, who attempts to thwart your purpose, show this ring—it is the signet of Romano Falcon, and will shield, unless your sex be discovered. Slip the bolts, and unbar the iron door and enter, where you will find your captive countrymen—tell them the object of your appearing there, and direct each one to possess himself of an escopeta, as he passes out, there being a stand of arms just within the cavern's mouth, kept there for the use of the guard.

Having succeeded in freeing the prisoners, there is another service which I would have you perform, solely of interest to me, and that is to possess yourself of a small casket, which you will find in the upper drawer of a cabinet in another apartment, the entrance to which is through another narrow passage, directly opposite to the one leading to the prisoners' cell. But this last service I do not desire you to attempt unless the captives, once freed and in arms, should overcome all who are left to guard the cavern. I have now told you all that is essential. Remember the instructions. Go, and may Heaven speed you.'

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With confidence that I should succeed at least in freeing my countrymen, I did precisely as she had directed—passed the sentinels without the least difficulty—dismounted and entered the gloomiest looking place I ever saw. However, I was too intent on the grand object of my errand to take note of things as I hurried along. I came to the narrow passage into which I turned and soon appeared before the iron door which had been described to me. With little effort I slipped the bolts, took down the bars, and opened the heavy door. In another minute all the prisoners had rushed out and possessed themselves of the escopetas. The alarm was given, and the guard with a few others fled affrighted, and without making the least resistance

I bethought me of the casket, and now feeling a great desire to render the lady a good service, I hurried to the apartment in which she said it was to be found. To my infinite surprise, on entering, a young and very beautiful lady ran and knelt at my feet, and implored me to spare her life. I heeded her not at this moment, but perceiving the cabinet I darted towards it, opened the drawer, and to my great delight possessed myself of the treasure which Romano Falcon's wife seemed so much to covet. When I turned I found that the lady who had supplicated for me to spare her life had fled. I thought it singular that I should be an object of terror to her eyes, but on reflection I bethought myself that I was not just then to appearance a woman; and, besides, a pair of pistols hung in my belt.

My errand having been thus successful, I issued from the cave, rejoined the liberated Americans, who had meanwhile possessed themselves of horses belonging to the guerrillas. I hastened to re-join the lady who had planned this enterprise; she had become aware of its success, and rode forth to me, and when I placed the casket in her hands, her brilliant eyes sparkled with delight, and words could not express her gratitude. She opened it, and selected from an immense number of rich jewels this diamond ring, which she placed upon my finger."

Here Elvira displayed to her father and Clifton, the valuable gift of which she had spoken.

"After an absence of three hours," continued Rosalia; "we arrived at the place whence we had started. Here we separated, and with the prisoners I hurried to your quarters, and was quite abashed when I discovered that I had neglected to throw off my disguise. This is the whole story in a few words: I'm sure there's nothing very marvelous about it."

'And yet,' remarked Colonel Granville, as he rubbed his hands, and his eyes spark-

ling with pride; 'I would stake my reputation as a soldier, that there's not one girl in twenty thousand who has courage enough to undertake a like expedition.'

'But you forget, father, the heroism of the Senorita Espindola, who once gave us liberty,' remarked Rosalia. 'My adventure, as regards the dangers that threatened me, is as nothing compared to that of the brave girl who effected our escape.'

'Ah, I didn't think of her,' said Granville; 'at all events, Rosa, I think you are quite a match for her. What say you, Clifton.'

'I have read of remarkable deeds performed by women in the olden time,' answered the Dragoon; 'but I was not before aware that the women of the present day possessed so much heroic spirit. From Elvira's narrative, I am convinced that this Romano Falcon is a greater villain than he appears to be, and we dealt but justly by him in mulcting him of that thousand dollars for the release of his lieutenant.'

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a messenger who handed a paper to Colonel Granville and immediately retired.

'It is from head quarters,' replied Granville, opening the missive, and reading its contents. 'Well, Clifton, we are to have no more fighting at present, for our battalion is here ordered to turn our backs upon the enemy, and to take up our quarters at Monterey!'

In accordance with this order, the Light Dragoons, on the following morning, left the scenes of their recent great and glorious conflict.

Without meeting with any startling adventures on the route, our friends, after a march of eight or ten days, once more entered the pleasant city of Monterey; and there was not one among them all who experienced so much delight on arriving hither, as Lieutenant Allston. He had made a confidante of

his captain, and had related most minutely all the details of his romantic adventures, in which Donna Elvira was so intimately connected. Clifton, at his request, and feeling a peculiar interest in his young friend's happiness, consented to accompany him on a visit to the Alcalde's residence, where he had left Elvira. By permission of the general-in-chief, Clifton was allowed to make an excursion in the direction of the village with his company, and he resolved to embrace this opportunity to gratify the wishes of his brother officer.

The corps left Monterey at sunrise, and without meeting with any adventures on the route, they reached the village at the breakfast hour, much to the consternation of the inhabitants, who feared that they had appeared for the purpose of ravaging their peaceful homes. The Alcalde made his appearance, and enquired the object of this unexpected visit from an armed force; and on being assured by Clifton that his errand was of the most pacific character, the worthy Alcalde offered the hospitalities of his casa to the officers, while he directed several of the leading men of the village to see that a collation was prepared for the rank and file.

As the officers followed the Alcalde into the mansion, the eyes of Allston were busy in looking around for the loved one he had hoped to meet there, but she made not her appearance. At length, addressing the hospitable Mexican, he enquired for the Senorita Espindola, who had placed herself under his protection after the decease of her father.

'She is yet under my care,' answered the Alcalde.

'I would speak with her,' pursued Allston.

'Alas, the poor child will speak with no one. She is almost inconsolable on account of the death of her father, or the absence of her lover.'

'You do not remember that we have met before?' said Allston.

'Methinks I do,' answered the Alcalde. 'Si, si! Santa Maria! Thou art the young American who—— Si, si! I know thee now! I'll call the dear young lady! She'll be rejoiced to see thee! I know she——' and without finishing the sentence he ran to call Elvira.

Quickly she obeyed the summons, and appeared before the Dragoon officers—in another moment she was clasped in the embrace of Henry Allston!

We shall not attempt to describe the joy of this meeting, nor repeat all that was uttered during an interview of two hours! but it ultimately resulted in Allston's prevailing upon Elvira to return with them to Monterey. Perhaps, with his persuasion alone, she would not have consented, for Clifton assured her that she had other friends in Monterey who would be delighted by a visit from her, and he mentioned the names of Colonel Granville and his fair daughter, Rosalia!

The mere mention of these individuals, awakened new feelings in the heart of Elvira, and she expressed the strongest desire to accompany them.

The Alcalde, offering no objection, Elvira prepared herself for the journey, and with a gallant company of Light Dragoons as an escort, and mounted upon a handsome steed, was soon on the road leading to Monterey.

CHAPTER XVI.

Elvira with her American Friends in Monterey. Her Birth-Day. Opening of the Sealed Packet. Wonderful Disclosures. Colonel Granville finds a Daughter. Elvira finds a Father. Rosalia finds a Sister. The Lovers acknowledge their Sweethearts—and all 'goes merry as a Marriage Bell.'



LET us, patient reader, now look in upon a group of our characters, who were assembled at Colonel Granville's quarters in the City of Monterey. It was at that delightful hour prior to the setting of the sun, or just at that period when that bright luminary had sunk behind the mountains which rear their snow-capped peaks westward of the captured city. Clifton, Allston, with the Senorita Espindola, had but a little time previous paid their respects to the Colonel and his daughter. It scarcely need be said that this meeting was a happy one to all parties—it could not have been otherwise under the circumstances—but it would be extremely difficult to say which one of the group experienced the most felicity on the occasion.

Major Granville and Rosalia both appeared to feel the most lively interest in the fair Mexican; indeed, the former made so many inquiries respecting her career, that he might have been deemed inquisitive, even impertinent in a youngman; though in him, who manifested such kind interest in pursuing his inquiries, that it was viewed by her and by all present in an opposite light. Rosalia, too, took part in the conversation, and

on her father's turning to her and asking her age, she replied—

'In November, the fourteenth day I shall be seventeen.'

'You're right, Rosa,' said the colonel.

'I am your senior by upwards of three years,' remarked Elvira; 'on the seventeenth of this month I shall be twenty.'

'Seventeenth!' repeated the colonel, referring to a miniature almanac; 'why, then, this is your birth-day.'

'It is, indeed!' exclaimed Elvira, with enthusiasm; 'in the excitement of this day I had quite forgotten it, although it has more than a birth-day's importance to me. I have a duty to perform, which is no less than to break the seal of a mysterious packet that was given me by my father on his death-bed. If I may be excused I will retire for a short time; and yet I had instruction to open it in the presence of a witness.'

'Let me be that witness,' said Rosalia, noticing the sudden emotion which this circumstance had caused her friend.

'I thank you, Rosalia,' she replied.

The two fair ones then arose and retired to Rosalia's chamber; and after seating themselves, Elvira took from her bosom, with a trembling hand, the mysterious packet that until that day she had injunctions not to op-

en. She broke the seal—tore off the envelope—and the first words that met her eye, written in a bold hand, were these :

“DON FERNANDEZ ESPINDOLA IS NOT THY FATHER!”

Elvira was startled, indeed, on reading this significant sentence; but, recovering her first surprise, she broke another seal, and on opening it, she found a hair necklace, and on the clasp was engraved—

“ELVIRA, JAN. 17, 1830.”

On the envelope which contained it, was written—

“THIS NECKLACE WAS WORN BY THEE WHEN AN INFANT!”

There was yet another seal—it was broken, and she found a letter addressed to her, and which she read aloud. It was as follows :—

“DEAREST ELVIRA :—Thou art not my daughter; yet hast thou been a comfort to my declining years. The circumstances attending thy being placed under my protection were simply these :—In years gone by it was my custom to travel much among the Indians at the north, for the purpose of trafficking with them, which I did to a considerable extent in jewelry and other ornaments; and gained by dealing with them, honestly, not only their confidence but their friendship. On one of these trading excursions I fell in with a party of Seminoles, whose acquaintance I had previously formed. They were just returning from an incursion into that part of the Florida territory then in the military possession of the United States.—They had been successful, and were laden with the trophies and valuables they had gained during the expedition. The chief of the party, who had conceived a particular fancy to me, invited me to share the hospitalities of his wigwam, which I accepted.—When I entered I manifested no little surprise on beholding in the arms of his squaw an infant, apparently but a few months old! My surprise did not escape the notice of my

savage host, and he satisfied my eager curiosity by telling me that the infant was the offspring of a commander of one of the pale faces' forts he had surprised and demolished, and whose mother he said was killed in the conflict. On my enquiring as to his future intentions towards the helpless babe, to my horror he informed me with the utmost coolness that it was to be massacred, to avenge the many injuries he had received from the father of the white papoose. I immediately remonstrated against his cruel intent without effect—I entreated, I implored him to spare the life of the little innocent but he was inexorable. At length, finding my efforts unavailing, I tried the virtue of some of my most valuable trinkets. His revengeful and barbarous determination I perceived began to relax as soon as his eyes feasted upon the gorgeous display my jewelry made. Following up the advantage I had thus gained by other valuables, I at length gained his consent to spare the life of the child, provided I would take it forever from his sight, and swear by the Great Spirit that I would adopt it as my own, and not to take any measures to find the parent of the child, or any of its connections, until twenty years from the date of the necklace about its neck should have passed away, and also that I should conceal, until the end of that period, the dated necklace. Finding that these terms only would satisfy the savage, I took the required oath, and have faithfully kept it. The necklace which is herewith enclosed is the identical one spoken of. I need not say that it once encircled thy neck, and that thou, Elvira, wast the infant whom I rescued from savage vengeance! I have ever loved thee with almost a parent's tenderness; and have, as thou already knowest, bequeathed to thee all the wealth that I possess. When this is opened—as I know thou wilt not violate my dying injunctions—thou wilt be twenty years of age, judging from the date upon the clasp of the necklace.—I know that thy desire will be great to find

thy parents and those of kindred blood. To facilitate thy search, I would advise thee, when a good opportunity offers, to repair to the capital of the United States, where thou wilt be enabled to learn the names of the several commanders who were stationed in Florida, during the years 1829 and '30, or up to the time of thy being made a captive by the Indians.

God bless thee, Elvira, and may he grant thee a long life of unalloyed felicity.

(Signed,) ESPINDOLA."

Elvira, wonder-struck at this startling revelation, could not give utterance to the conflicting thoughts which rushed into her mind, and she burst into a flood of tears. They were not tears of grief; nor were they tears of joy; but shed from purely sympathetic and grateful impulses for him who for a score of years had been almost wholly devoted to render her happy. Espindola had, truly, been a parental protector, yet that true affection existing between a father and his child was not apparent. It was of a different nature and beyond our power of analyzing.

Rosalia, too, was startled at this revelation, and with tears of sympathy in her eyes, and with her arms entwined in sisterly affection around her neck, endeavored to soothe her agitation. Elvira, at length, ceased weeping, and gazed with intense interest upon her fair comforter, and for some time they remained clasped in each other's embrace from impulses neither understood nor dreamed of. Never did two human beings, bound together by a sentiment wholly inexplicable, render humanity more lovely and angelic, than they. For nearly two hours did they commune together, and never did lovers' moments pass more fleetly by.

Colonel Granville, becoming impatient at the protracted absence of the young ladies, and thinking that no ordinary matter would keep them absent so long, excused himself to his brother officers, and hastened to learn the cause of their delay.

The door of Rosalia's apartment was open, and as the colonel approached, he beheld his daughter and the fair Mexican with their right hands clasped and their left arms resting upon each other's neck. As he entered, Rosalia arose and said,—

'Father, I know you will excuse our long absence, when you have heard the wonderful things, regarding our dear friend, which have been revealed to me. She has been so deeply affected by it, that I chose to remain with her rather than rejoin our company below.'

'Indeed,' said the father, 'I trust it is not a matter of serious import?'

'Kind sir,' said Elvira, addressing Granville, perhaps your profession will enable you to give me some information whereby light may be thrown upon the mystery that has long overshadowed me, and which is partially revealed in these words;' and she placed in his hand the sentence which had at first so startled her.

He took the paper and read—"Don Fernandez Espindola is not thy father!"—"This is truly mysterious," he continued; 'but be consoled, Elvira—a friend you shall never want so long as I live; but is this all?'

'No, kind sir, here is a letter that was also contained in the packet relative to the perils of my infancy,' said Elvira, giving him Espindola's communication.

The colonel seated himself near the window to peruse it, as the grey shadows of twilight had already begun to darken the earth. He had read but a few sentences when his eyes glowed with an eager interest—soon the hand which held the paper began to tremble—his lip quivered—and as he read on his whole frame seemed almost convulsed with agitation;—at the same time there was a rigid smile upon his noble features. At length the communication dropped from his hand—his respiration was rapid and heavy—drops of perspiration stood upon his brow—and his eyes gleamed with unwonted lustre.

Rosalia, observing how violent were his emotions, ran towards him and exclaimed :

‘Oh, my father! you are ill!’

‘No, my child, no! Elvira, asked he, eagerly, ‘have you the necklace here spoken of?’

‘This is it,’ said she, handing it to him, and wondering at the strange interest he manifested.

‘It is! it is the same!’ he exclaimed with joy almost overpowering. ‘Oh, God, thy ways are, indeed, inscrutable and wonderful! Elvira, look at me—I AM THY FATHER!—you are my long lost and beloved child!’

‘My father! oh, this is the most blissful moment of my existence!’ she cried, as she flew to his arms and was clasped in his embrace, while tears gushed from the fountain of bliss of both father and child.

Rosalia regarded this scene with almost mute astonishment. Here was a mystery totally inexplicable to her.

‘Rosalia, embrace thy sister!’ said the overjoyed colonel, after the first ebullition of feeling had somewhat subsided. ‘You had two mothers—but only one father!’

The arms of the sisters were again warmly encircled about each other’s necks, and their lips met—it was the first kiss of a sisterly love.

The father at length explained to his daughters the circumstances attending the loss of Elvira’s mother, whom he wedded at Pensacola, and who was the daughter of a nobleman, banished from Spain; and, also, of his reasonable supposition that the infant whom the savages conveyed away fell a victim to their burning vengeance.

Thus was revealed to father and daughters the unaccountable and deep interest each had felt for the other from the perilous hour when they first met.

There never was a happier man than the veteran colonel after this discovery. The evening having now considerably advanced he returned to his military friends below, and excused the non-appearance of the la-

dies, and promised them that, if they would but visit his quarters at a certain hour on the next day, he would afford them an agreeable surprise.

* * * * *

Punctual to the appointed hour Captain Clifton and Lieutenant Allston made their appearance, when to their infinite wonder, Colonel Granville introduced them to Elvira Granville, his newly found daughter!

Obeying the unreserved impulses of her nature, Elvira, on seeing Allston, received him with rather more warmth than is usually exhibited excepting among acknowledged lovers.

Granville, perceiving this, looked at Clifton, with an expression in his countenance that seemed to enquire—‘What does this mean?’

‘Do not be alarmed, colonel, at this little ebullition of affection,’ said Clifton; ‘they have been already too much in each other’s society to act otherwise. Be assured, sir, they have a mutual understanding.’

‘I see—I see—there’s not a doubt of it,’ replied Granville. ‘Well, well, Allston is a brave, a gallant, and a noble-hearted fellow—I shall be proud to acknowledge him as my son-in-law. ‘I see how it is, lieutenant,’ he continued, turning to Allston, ‘and I perceive that matters between you have approached too near a climax, for me to oppose any obstacle to your future happiness. You have my hearty approval without asking for it; and I’m sure you’ll never rue the day you came to Mexico.’

‘Never, believe me,’ replied the happy lieutenant. ‘Cupid has done for me that which escopeta balls have failed to do.’

‘I marvel not when I look upon the cause. Rosa,’ said the colonel, ‘come hither. I have a word or two to say to you, touching this same sharp-shooting love-god. I never heard a syllable upon the universal topic of love pass between Captain Clifton and yourself; but as I am an old campaigner in Cupid’s affairs, I can read the meaning of a

glance, a smile, or a sigh, just as easily as if expressed in words. I have constituted myself a 'corps of observation' upon your manœuvring for some time, and if I have been out-generalled this time, I'll confess I have lost the art of divining the secrets of the heart through the eyes—those 'windows of the soul,' as some poet hath it. But to the point—you love each other!—Now don't deny it because, perchance, you have never confessed it to each other—I'm satisfied you have confessed it to your own hearts! If I'm wrong say so, and hereafter set me down a superannuated old fool!

This was an awkward as well as a critical moment for the gallant captain and the fair Rosalia; they were both considerably abashed, and dared not look up in fear of encountering each other's gaze.

At length Clifton mustered up a little courage and essayed to speak—he stammered forth the following:

'I—I con—that is, I suppose—I may as well confess—'

'That I have read your eyes aright?' suggested the colonel.

'Precisely so,' replied Clifton; 'I do love Rosalia.'

'And I——' The abashed girl could utter no more, but did not snatch away her pretty hand when Clifton took it and raised it to her lips to kiss; in the next moment she

concealed her happy emotions upon his manly breast.

'There now,' said the delighted colonel; 'things are as they should be! I knew I was right! Well, my children—and I hope soon to call you so—our time of service soon expires in the army, when we shall return to the United States; and if Granville cottage does not resound once more with the merry music of glad voices, then my predictions, which seldom fail, will be naught.'

The Light Dragoons, their term of enlistment expiring, soon returned to the United States. The colonel's prophecy is not yet fulfilled, but it is rumored that great preparations are making at Granville Cottage, to consummate the happiness of at least five of our characters. Should anything occur to mar the intended happy event, our readers shall be duly informed.

It is Allston's intention as soon as 'Peace is conquered'—or rather as soon as Mexico is conquered—to return to that country for the purpose of claiming the estates of the deceased Espindola, in the name of the heiress, Elvira.

Thus, kind reader, we complete our task; and our only hope is, that you have derived some pleasure in poring over the pages of 'The Light Dragoon.'

THE END.

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